



Fall 2020/Winter 2021

Abby Normal Holidays

Who thought we would be asking questions this year like, “Who is that masked man?” and “Why aren’t you wearing a mask?!?” Our lives have taken on a new normal – some might say “Abby Normal” – since this pandemic began. It’s been the new and very important normal for our volunteers since mid-March, and here it is after the Holidays.

Few challenges have been this world-changing and life-altering. The pandemic has affected everyone and everything, and contributed greatly to the numbers of those in need as we all try to survive. It also means “virtual” Holidays this year. Mask up, but help is on the way!

During the worsening crisis, our masked volunteers have helped box up food supplies, make deliveries, hold Mobile Pantries, distribute masks and more in an effort to feed the need. Our Days of Caring volunteers helped local non-profits for a week. Our United Way campaign raised much-needed funds. We have the support of our leadership who sees the wisdom in helping our community through volunteerism.

Let me wish you all a safe and hopeful New Year! Contact me, VIP editor **Dan Hope**, Corporate Communications, at dhope@mlgw.org.

MLGW’s United Way Campaign Stands United

United We Stand! This year has been rather different for everyone, but one thing that remains is the same generous attitude of our company and its employees. The 2020 MLGW United Way Campaign began October 19 and ran through October 30. United Way Campaign Chair, **Chantal Lairy**, Customer Experience & Market Analysis, is proud we came together to support the United Way of the Mid-South in providing services to those in need in these troubling times.

The 2020 campaign goal of \$665,000 was the same as last year because our United Way campaign committee wanted our donors to focus on giving what they can. Capturing the need to come together in a new way, the campaign slogan this unique year was, “United We Stand.” United Way Key Persons were trained on how to conduct meetings in September at a virtual Zoom training, and met virtually with their departments during the campaign to encourage donations.

It’s never too late to donate to United Way! If you have any questions, contact United Way Chair, **Chantal Lairy** at clairy@mlgw.org.



Holding a “virtual” Key Person training, MLGW’s 2020 United Way Campaign Steering Committee includes (front row, l-r) **Chantal Lairy**, Customer Experience & Market Analysis and campaign chair; **Melissa Perez**, Water Engng.; **Taurus Bradford**, Water Dist. - SSC; **Chevita Boyd**, Storeroom 85; and **Marshawn Strickland**, Water Meter Shop; and (2nd row, l-r) **Portia Williams**, Sys. Ops. Mgr’s Ofc.; **LaConteau Williams**, Corp. Comm.; **Myron Stewart**, Electric. Dist. - HHSC; **Bryant Hannah**, Network Gen. Construction; **Jason Dunavant**, Customer Svc. - HHSC/SSC; and **Paula Hatton**, Customer Accts. & Recs.

Days and Days of Caring

Each year, MLGW volunteers join United Way of Greater Memphis to kick off its annual campaign with a massive volunteer effort in Shelby County communities to make one bold statement, “We Care!” In 2020, United Way’s Days of Caring were the week of September 21-25, and each day MLGW volunteers arrived at a predetermined site to do everything from cleaning playgrounds to yard work to clean-up and painting. The United Way non-profit agencies who get our help love it!

With COVID-19 presenting barriers on how we gather together, MLGW volunteers still found ways to give back to the community compassionately and adhere to social distancing guidelines. For five days and five ways, more than 60 employees from across the Division signed up to serve United Way partner agencies in the community. Equipped with masks, gloves and plenty of compassion, employees volunteered at the Hope House, Botanic Gardens and Grizzlies Center, Memphis Athletic Ministries Briarcrest Center, Knowledge Quest and Grace House.

House of Hope

First on the Days of Caring menu was Hope House, a Midtown non-profit that houses and takes care of kids who have been affected by HIV or other challenges. Volunteers at the Hope House hand-washed playground equipment and toys, ensuring children had a safe and clean place to play.



Botanic Gardening

Employees who volunteered at Botanic Gardens really got their hands dirty while working in natural surroundings, clearing walkways, trails and paths for visitors and removing weeds and unwelcome plants.



Yes, MAM!

Despite a cold rain, our United Way team cleaned up, weeded and more at Memphis Athletic Ministries (MAM) Grizzlies Center. They completed several projects to address MAM’s safety needs including power-washing the concrete, removing a walkway-blocking tree and mulching flower beds.



More, MAM?

MLGW’s Engineering and Operations department volunteered at the Memphis Athletic Ministries Headquarters for Days of Caring. Volunteers removed weeds, power washed, scrubbed sidewalks, and painted the driveway and sidewalk.



Quest for Knowledge

MLGW volunteers at Knowledge Quest picked up trash, cleaned the greenhouse and garden used for their students' Green Leaf Farming Project and cleaned playground equipment for the students there.



Grace House painting

A small group of MLGW painters volunteered at Grace House, where they painted three bedrooms to help prepare rooms for recovering tenants who need a place to stay.



Key Person Training

The 2020 United Way Days of Caring Team hosted Key Person Training via Zoom in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. MLGW's Steering Committee gathered in the Administration Building Board room to conduct one-day training to prepare Key Persons with fundraising tips for their areas. "Holding Key Person Training virtually was definitely a change!" said **Chantal Lairy**, Customer Experience/Market Analysis, our campaign chair. "We missed seeing each other, dancing, laughing and most of all eating a good lunch together! However, 2020 has shown us that even though we are apart, we can still get the job done one way or another. The virtual Key Person Training was a success, but we look forward to being back in person next year."

Thank You!

A very special "Thank you!" to all employees who volunteered for Days of Caring and showed our community that, United We Stand, and to all employees who donate to United Way! Volunteering is just one of many ways you can help your community especially during this pandemic. If you were unable to volunteer this year, you can still help by pledging to United Way even after the campaign. If you have questions, contact 2020 MLGW United Way Chair Chantal Lairy at clairy@mlgw.org. (More United Way photos in *Volunteer Views*, pp. 11-13.)



United Way Golf: In the Hole!

Determined golfers hit the links on Friday, October 16 to raise funds in our annual MLGW United Way Golf Tournament. Organized once again by evergreen MLGW golfers **Ryan Groves**, Ethics & Compliance, and **Robbie Gaia**, Customer Accounts & Records, the tourney this year was held at the Links at Fox Meadows, a public course in southeast Memphis.

After a day of fun in the sun, the First Flight 1st Place award went to the MLGW team of **Richard Boda**, **Herbie Hinton**, **Richard Smith** and Andy Gresham with a score of 57 (-14). In 2nd Place First Flight were Blake Hanks, Patrick Dalton, **Thomas Trieschman** and Cornwallis Willis with a score of 58 (-13).



*Behind those masks staffing golf registration were MLGW volunteers (l-r) **Paula Hatton**, Customer Accts. & Recs.; **Chevita Boyd**, Storeroom 85; **Melissa Perez**, Water Engrng.; and **Portia Williams**, Systems Operations Mgr's Ofc.*



*United Way Golf Tournament organizers **Robbie Gaia** and **Ryan Groves** preside over golfer check-in and pre-play instructions prior to the tourney start.*

Second Flight 1st Place belonged to **Josh Davis**, Kade Davis, David Moss and Robert Vennemann with a score of 68 (-3). Second Flight 2nd Place went to **Aubrey King**, Donnie Castle, Michael Chitwood and Chris Lindsay who had a tying score of 68 (-3) (the tiebreaker was totals on par 3s). Longest Drive winners were Jonathan Holliday on #5 and Sam Nagel on #16. Closest to the Pin winners were Lance Saunders on #8 and Timothy Dwyer on #13.

"We had pretty great weather for mid-October and by most accounts, everyone had a great time," said tourney organizer Ryan Groves. "And we have to thank our golfers 'fore' coming out and raising more than \$15,000 for United Way." (*More Golf Tourney photos in Volunteer Views, p. 10.*)



*An executive team hitting the links for a little golf included (l-r) Ken Moody, MLGW Commissioner **Leon Dixon Sr.**, Bobby Towns, and MLGW President and CEO **J.T. Young**, ready for some eagles.*



*Driving perfection... **Brandon Lindsey** shows the perfect form as he hits a drive from the fairway.*

Mobile Food in HOT and Cool Weather

It was a hot and steamy day... in July, but a bit cooler day in September. Both days, fresh lines of cars once again snaked into the distance down Raleigh-LaGrange, holding hungry Memphians in need of food.

As more than 400 still-hungry families showed up to receive food assistance from MLGW volunteers on Thursday, July 2 and still more came on Tuesday, September 29, MLGW held its second and third COVID-19 Mobile Food Pantries in front of the Division's Joyce Blackmon Training Center. We were feeding the need, and there's definitely a need to feed right now.

In partnership with the Mid-South Food Bank, the mobile pantry was organized by MLGW's Corporate Social Responsibility area. Boxes of food along with produce, canned goods, frozen chicken, beverages and more were distributed to families who drove through. MLGW volunteers placed supplies in families' cars while masked up and gloved for safety.

Fifty MLGW volunteers were involved in the effort. Event coordinators **Beverly Perkins**, **Ken Mack** and **Jennifer Price**, Corporate Social Responsibility, **Terica Lamb**, Economic & Community Development, and **Gaston Moulin**, Corporate Social Responsibility, gathered volunteers and arranged for food trucked in by the Food Bank as our volunteers loaded up cars with boxes of food. Families receiving food were so grateful, expressing their thanks and relief in knowing where their next meals were coming from. (More Mobile Pantry photos in Volunteer Views, p. 13.)



Bagging, boxing and loading up cars with their trunks open at the Training Center on July 2 were volunteers (l-r) **Tabrena Wilson**, Gas Matrix Mgr's Ofc.; **Yashica Perry**, Whitehaven Community Ofc.; and **Clift Phillips**, Gas Engineering.



MLGW leadership including (l-r) VP of Community and External Affairs **Gale Jones Carson**, VP of Accounting **Roland McElrath**, Chief Internal Auditing Officer **Lesa Walton**, and President and CEO **J.T. Young** chipped in to help at the Mobile Pantry on September 29.

Mobile Food (continued)



Once the Food Bank truck was unloaded, stacks and piles of food packages awaited eager recipients whose cars were filled with needed food by MLGW volunteers working tirelessly in the July heat.



Lela Garlington, Corporate Communications, reveals the perfect pepper destined for someone's kitchen and a family meal.

Volunteer Spotlight

Chantal Lairy: From Rookie to Chief

Sink or swim! Thrown in the deep end, a new employee here for only a month was recruited by her manager who realized her potential and asked her to be the department's Key Person. "Key?" she wondered. "What does it fit?" Apparently, it fit quite well, and since those early days, **Chantal Lairy** has moved from rookie to chief of one of the MLGW's biggest annual fundraisers – United Way. Swim!

Chantal started at MLGW in August 2012 in the Supplier Diversity department working for Jozelle Booker and Renise Holliday who are now retired. "Supplier Diversity was an exciting department to work in," says Chantal. "I met a lot of people at the company, there was something different every day, but we still had plenty of work to get done. I will forever be thankful for Jozelle taking me under her wing and trying to guide me in the right direction."

Chantal's first volunteer activity was as a Key Person for United Way. "I had only been at the Division a little over a month and Jozelle assigned me," she says. "At first I was nervous and clueless about United Way. I didn't know anything about what I was supposed to do. I was even too shy to talk at our department meeting (that's changed!). I remember going to the non-profit agency SRVS and seeing all the adults with disabilities. It really touched me and made me realize how blessed I was."

She's been a Key Person for United Way four times, served on the United Way Steering Committee in 2018, served as the United Way co-chair in 2019 and was the United Way chair for 2020 – the Chief! "As if 2020 didn't throw a wrench in the way we normally do the United Way campaign!" muses Chantal. "Because of COVID-19, we didn't have a campaign co-chair – the first year without a co-chair. Chantal was also a key person for Operation Feed three times, ensuring the department had 100 percent participation. In 2020, when MLGW started hosting mobile food pantries at the Training Center, she helped with two of those efforts."



Chantal Lairy

Joining the United Way Steering Committee, she had a chance to learn more about United Way. The week-long Days of Caring allowed her to go to different United Way agencies every day and experience what they do. "This experience showed me how much the agencies need our donations and how much the community depends on these agencies," Chantal recalls. "It also taught me how blessed I am to be healthy, to work for a good company with benefits and understand that we never know what tomorrow holds. It made me take United Way more seriously in wanting to get 100 percent participation throughout the company and take my own contributions seriously."

"Our Key Person Training this year on Zoom was interesting," Chantal remembers. "But it worked out. How did we do? We'll have final figures in January, but it looks like we did as well as last year, which is great news!"

Chantal has also participated in several walks over the years for fundraisers such as the American Heart Association, Kidney Walk, Walk United, St. Jude Walk/Run and Race to Care. "At all of those events, MLGW had a team and I had to raise money," she recalls. "MLGW held Walk United for United Way in 2015. The route was three miles long starting at MLGW, and walking down by the river and back. By the time we got to the river, the skies just opened up and POURED! It was good to see everyone pushing on through the rain. We all came back soaked! But it was all for a great cause."

At the first Mobile Food Pantry, the weather was wicked. It was windy and rained. "I pulled up at 7 a.m., and the line of cars already wrapped around the Training Center to the area in back where food was being loaded. Cars were stretched down Raleigh-LaGrange as far as the eye could see. The first family to roll up said they had been in line since 3 a.m. in the morning. Another lady had three kids in the car – waiting since 4 a.m.! Poor babies, you know they were tired and restless."

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Chantal moonlights as MLGW's Conservation Girl, in costume at various events, especially school gatherings where she often teams up with MLGW's Terminator. "I met **Anthony Harrison**, Electric Dist. - HHSC, when he appeared as Terminator and I was Conservation Girl at Shrine School for kids with Cerebral Palsy," says Chantal. "It really touched me. I'd never seen so many disabled children at one school. My sons were both born prematurely, at risk for Cerebral Palsy or disabilities. So it hit close to home."

She's a member of Bellevue Baptist Church where she volunteers. Bellevue Baptist holds quarterly volunteer events called Bellevue loves Memphis. "We go into the community and do hundreds of volunteer activities which can be kid-friendly, so I take my two boys with me. I want them to know how blessed they are to be healthy and not have to want for anything. We may not have everything or be rich, but we are rich with love, and we have each other."

In 2019, Lauren and **Callen Hays**, Corporate Safety, came to speak at a Key Person event. Lauren works at Memphis Oral School for the Deaf, one of United Way's agencies. They have a son who was born deaf and has cochlear implants. "That touched my heart because my oldest son had mild hearing loss when he was born," recalls Chantal. "He went to Memphis Oral School for speech articulation. Listening to Lauren and Callen speak makes you realize your life can be one way today, then change in an instant."

"I'm also involved with St. Jude," Chantal says. "Prior to COVID-19, my boys and I would participate in the annual September St. Jude 5K walk/run. It's definitely a fun, learning experience. I still haven't participated in the big St. Jude marathon in December. It's on my bucket list to get up, in the cold, and go participate. But I hate cold weather. LOL!"

"When I first started at MLGW, there were so many volunteer events," recalls Chantal. "When I saw Ms. Mary (Mary White, retired volunteer coordinator) coming, I knew she wanted me to do something. I sure miss Mary! She always tried to get me to participate in various events



Chantal often appears as Conservation Girl at school events.

like the Heart Walk. Leading up to the date, employees would have monthly walks to City Hall on Fridays. Then we had a team on the day of the event. Those monthly walks were always a fun time to get some exercise with your co-workers."

Chantal's advice for our volunteers? "A lot of people just like to come to work, do their job and go home," she says. "But you don't have to be an extrovert to volunteer. Volunteering is an opportunity to meet new people, do something different and do a good deed. Don't be afraid to try something different."

"To me volunteering is more than about just giving money. It's about getting the full experience of helping someone out! I love helping people. I have been that person who needs help and could be that person who needs help again. I also love to participate in volunteer events with my boys. I want them to grow up seeing me volunteer and help others so they will know how important it is to think of others and not just yourself." To have a mom like Chantal, they must be quite inspired to volunteer.

Going from rookie to chief of MLGW's United Way Campaign has been quite a journey for Chantal. Her shyness has certainly disappeared, and she sure motivates our United Way volunteers to do great things. Looks like Chantal has done more than just "swim."

2021 Winter Volunteer Calendar

Many MLGW fall and winter volunteer and charitable events have been canceled or postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of MLGW's suspended volunteer and charitable events will resume when it is safe to do so. Current volunteer opportunities to help in the community during the pandemic will be listed in the Weekly Bulletin. If you have any questions, 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.

Community Food Bank Pantries

During the pandemic, many of our neighbors have struggled. One of Shelby County's greatest resources is the Mid-South Food Bank who for months has held innumerable and constant mobile food pantries around the city, some in partnership with MLGW (see pp. 5-6). MLGW volunteers were also kept busy this year helping to staff other Food Bank mobile pantries at churches and community centers around the city virtually every day, such as New Salem Church, Idlewild Presbyterian, Mt. Zion Baptist, New Hope Christian, Iglesia Nueva Vida, Lowrance Park – far too many to mention them all here! Many thanks to the Food Bank and to all of our MLGW food pantry volunteers for feeding the hungry! You are indeed special!



Masks for the Mid-South

MLGW volunteers pitched in to help distribute free protective masks to the community in partnership with Volunteer Memphis, who created the masks, and the Food Bank. From Nov. 17 through Dec. 22, 20,000 masks in 16 different giveaways were distributed throughout the Mid-South. It's an important effort as Tennessee approaches the worst US COVID-19 infection rate. **Latonya Alexander**, Enterprise Residential Planning, (pictured) assembles mask packages at home for distribution.



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.



In the Hole: It takes a village! Staffing check-in, arranging for lunch, assigning golf carts and doing virtually everything were MLGW/ United Way volunteers and Steering Committee (l-r) **Taurus Bradford**, Water Dist. - HHSC; **Myron Stewart**, Electric Dist. - HHSC; **Marshawn Strickland**, Water Meter Shop; **Jason Dunavant**, Customer Svc. - HHSC/SSC; **Paula Hatton**, Customer Accts. & Recs.; **Portia Williams**, System Operations Mgr's Ofc.; **Gathion Knight**, Gas Dist. - NSC; **Chevita Boyd**, Storeroom 85; **Melissa Perez**, Water Engrng.; and **Chantal Lairy**, Customer Experience & Market Analysis.



In the Hole: The MLGW volunteer on-the-course crew assisting with possible hole-in-one confirmations were **Jason Dunavant**, Customer Svc. - HHSC/SSC; **Marshawn Strickland**, Water Meter Shop; **Taurus Bradford**, Water Dist. - HHSC; and **Melissa Perez**, Water Engrng.



Going for a long putt on a glorious day is **Jeana Wiehl-Bond**, Property Mgmt. Survey, with teammate Brad Eldred observing. The ball rolls and rolls and goes... Oops.

Volunteer Views



Daze of Caring: United Way Days of Caring volunteers from MLGW worked hard at the Memphis Athletic Ministries Grizzlies Athletic Center and danced on the green afterward to celebrate their handiwork.



Daze of Caring: Wet and rainy weather hindered Days of Caring efforts a couple of days including Friday, Sept. 25 as MLGW/ United Way volunteers worked to clean up and landscape the grounds of Memphis Athletic Ministries headquarters.

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 our 2020 MLK Day of Service. This year's MLK Day of Service was changed to a drive through for our January 15, 2020 volunteer event due to COVID-19. Report and photos will appear in the next VIP.



Daze of Caring: MLGW volunteers paused for a group photo while cleaning up trails and pathways at Memphis Botanic Garden for United Way's Days of Caring the week of September 21-25.

Volunteer Views



Daze of Caring: Helping clean up and weed the students' Green Leaf Farming Project garden, MLGW United Way volunteer **Paulette Gordon**, Human Performance & People Development, poses by the students' flower beds full of glorious colorful zinnias.



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 first Mobile Food Pantry on June 4 in partnership with the Mid-South Food Bank.*