



Spring 2022

Blips in the Future

As rumors of yet another surge appear on the horizon, we as volunteers look instead to the future and to the needs of our fellow community members. That's why we continue to volunteer for food pantries, fundraisers, community events and school outreach whether there are blips on the horizon or not. MLGW volunteers care about our neighbors.

That's evident in this issue where MLGW volunteer efforts this spring include three Mobile Food Pantries to serve the hungry in our community suffering from the virus's health and economic consequences, the AHA Heart Walk, an outreach for MLK Day in Soulsville, a United Way Key Persons appreciation with another campaign just over the horizon, and much more. **Derek Mitchell**, Water Plant Maintenance Supply Ops, is our Volunteer Spotlight this issue.

Rumors are... Corporate Social Responsibility is working on both an MLGW Volunteer app and Volunteer Handbook to help with your volunteer efforts. More about that next issue.

Keep up the great work, volunteers! If you have MLGW volunteer event information or photos, contact VIP editor **Dan Hope** at dhope@mlgw.org.

MLK Day in Soulsville

On a thankfully warm January day, MLGW volunteers fanned out across Soulsville for MLK Day of Service after assembling energy-saving kits to deliver throughout the neighborhood.

Our volunteers bivouacked at the J.E. Walker Resource Center – part of LeMoyne-Owen College – at 1109 Mississippi Blvd. on January 13 where a multitude of money-saving energy kits were assembled and bagged on tables on the front lawn. Then they headed out in several groups carrying armfuls of the bags to deliver those energy kits to residents in the area.

Soulsville residents were very grateful for the kits and information. Many thanks to all our volunteers for walking miles to assist our neighbors in need. Thanks also goes to our splendid Security team who kept us feeling safe! (More photos in Volunteer Views or follow link: [flickr.com/photos/mlgwpix/albums/72177720295964089/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/mlgwpix/albums/72177720295964089/))



MLGW volunteers walk through Soulsville passing Sugar Hill Museum on the opposite corner from the famous Four Way Soul Food Restaurant as they deliver energy-saving kits to residents.



MLGW's energy-saving kits were assembled in front of the J.E. Walker Resource Center on Mississippi Blvd. before our volunteers embarked upon a distribution excursion through Soulsville.



MLGW volunteers for MLK Day in Soulsville pose for a group shot in front of the J.E. Walker Resource Center before embarking on their generous journey throughout the neighborhood.

Walking with Heart

On Saturday, April 23, starting at the FedExForum, a large group of MLGW employees participated in the American Heart Association's 2022 Mid-South Heart Walk & Red Dress Dash. The chair for this year's Heart Walk was none other than MLGW's President and CEO **J.T. Young**, and the Division was second in donations with a total of \$12,808.48. The Top 5 Walkers group was led by MLGW Board of Commissioners Chairman **Mitch Graves**, who raised a total of \$20,063.80. Congratulations also go to **President Young** and **Beverly Taylor**, Insurance, who received recognition as Top Walkers, and **Nathan Smith**, Strat. IT Systems Business Consulting, who received a Lifestyle Change Award. A robust group of MLGW walkers participated in the fundraising walk downtown, and other employees joined in by walking virtually or at other locales. (More photos in Volunteer Views and on flickr here: [flickr.com/photos/mlgwpix/albums/72177720298437836/with/52034035658/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/mlgwpix/albums/72177720298437836/with/52034035658/))



MLGW's large team of Heart Walkers who walked downtown posed for a group pic in front of the FedExForum, site of the walk's start/finish line. Still more employees participated in the Heart Walk by walking in their favorite park or neighborhood.



At the AHA Heart Walk, MLGW's **Beverly Taylor** was honored as a Top Walker. Out of the four MLGW teams, her team from our Insurance department raised the biggest amount, \$2,727.03.



Kelly Jo Graves and MLGW Commissioner **Mitch Graves** pose with 2022 Heart Walk Chairman **J.T. Young** and his wife Deidre. Mitch and J.T. were both Top 5 Walkers, as well.

And they're off!
The start of the Heart Walk is usually a race off the line as several "walkers" contend for the overall first place finish. All for a great cause!



Have we got Food! MLGW Mobile Pantries

There are lots of hungry people in Memphis, especially due to the pandemic. Seeing that need, MLGW partners with the Mid-South Food Bank and local churches and non-profits to hold Mobile Food Pantries including three so far this year, on February 8 and 11 and on April 21.



A group pic to thank all of our Mobile Food Pantry volunteers at the Training Center who helped organize and load food into the cars of our neighbors in need.



*State Trooper Rogers smiles as he and **Jimmy McMorris**, Elec. Sys. Ops., gather up foodstuffs for hungry residents driving through the Food Pantry.*

Mobile Pantry at the Training Center

MLGW volunteers held the first MLGW Mobile Food Pantry of the year on Tuesday, February 8 at MLGW's Joyce Blackmon Training Center. They were joined in this particular effort by a group of Tennessee State Troopers. Many grateful people were helped by the Mobile Pantry, held in partnership with the Mid-South Food Bank. In all, 373 hungry families were served at this mobile pantry. The need is still great as Memphis and Shelby County residents are still recovering from a pandemic and an ice storm. (More photos in Volunteer Views and on flickr: [flickr.com/photos/mlgwpix/albums/72177720296691023](https://www.flickr.com/photos/mlgwpix/albums/72177720296691023))



On a cold February morning, MLGW volunteers helped warm the hearts (and tummies) of hungry families, loading up their cars with much-appreciated food supplies.

Chelsea Community Center Pantry

MLGW's "volunteer army" was out serving those in need in our community at yet another Mobile Food Pantry in partnership with the Food Bank on Friday, February 11.

After pallets of food were delivered, MLGW employees began filling the trunks and hatches of hungry Memphis families in the hastily planned mobile pantry. Recipients received frozen meats, cob corn, melons, milk, bread, canned goods and much more for area families still in need after two years of the pandemic and its many challenges. Added up, 383 hungry families were helped by this mobile pantry. Many thanks to MLGW volunteers for their caring efforts! (More photos in Volunteer Views and on flickr here: [flickr.com/photos/mlgwpix/albums/72177720296765426/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/mlgwpix/albums/72177720296765426/))



Food supplies are stacked high at MLGW's Mobile Food Pantry at Dave Wells Center on Chelsea as our volunteers serve more than 380 grateful residents.



*A smiling **Kim Bond**, Economic and Community Development, carries boxes of food to the waiting cars of hungry residents looking for relief, loading up their cargo holds with supplies to help them feed their families.*

*Lieutenant **Charles O'Kelley**, MLGW Security, carries a lovely pair of melons to place in a family's car as they drive through the MLGW Mobile Food Pantry on Chelsea.*



Our volunteers at the Chelsea Mobile Pantry posed for a photo after food from the Food Bank was loaded into the cars of grateful residents.

Frayser Mobile Pantry

Spring was in the air in late April when MLGW volunteers, State Troopers and the Food Bank organized a third MLGW Food Pantry in late April. People are still hungry, as we all know.

Partnering again with the Mid-South Food Bank, MLGW held a Mobile Food Pantry for the first time in Frayser on Thursday, April 21 at the Breath of Life Christian Church on Frayser-Raleigh Rd. Once it was determined that the intermittent rain had ended, Food Bank trucks full of food were unloaded and MLGW employees began filling the trunks and hatches of hungry Memphis families. Recipients received sweet potatoes, dried rice and beans, cereal, cheese, canned goods and other nutritional options for area families still in need after more than two years of the pandemic and its many challenges. Add inflation to that, and you have lots of folks hungry. There were 251 families fed by this mobile pantry. Let's offer thanks to our caring MLGW volunteers for their dedication! *(More photos in Volunteer Views and on flickr here: [flickr.com/photos/mlgwpix/albums/72177720298417626/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/mlgwpix/albums/72177720298417626/))*



Paulette Gordon, MLGW Univ., sorts through healthy citrus fruit loading the oranges into boxes for families driving through MLGW's Mobile Food Pantry in Frayser as **LaTonya Alexander**, Enterprise Resource Planning, gets ready for another car.



MLGW volunteers, including (front to back) **Barbara Martin** (retired), **Lynda Pruitt** and **Susan Reynolds**, Credit Ops, are lined up and ready for the first cars and SUVs in line to drive through so they can load them with food.



Hungry residents who lined up for the pantry by Breath of Life Church on Frayser-Raleigh Rd. were very appreciative, smiling and thanking our volunteers for the food supplies they're taking home to feed their families.



Tennessee State Troopers once again joined MLGW volunteers to help load and direct cars at the Frayser Food Pantry. Thank you, Troopers!

Cookies of Love

Students from St. Agnes School for Girls know what it's like to be without power. The school and half of its students' homes were without power after February's ice storm. St. Agnes Chaplain Larkin Stuppy thought students should hold a cookie drive to show their appreciation for MLGW linemen who worked during Ice Storm Landon. Several students delivered home-baked cookies to both Hickory Hill and North Service Center in February.

The St. Agnes students surprised restoration workers at our North Service Center with a thank you gift of homemade cookies – a tableful! The students arrived around midday Thursday, February 24, and laid out the cookies in NSC Bldg. 1, awaiting MLGW workers as they returned from more restoration work in Shelby Forest and Millington after yet another ice storm. Other St. Agnes students delivered cookies to Hickory Hill Service Center. Such a tasty surprise! Many thanks to our workers for those restoration efforts, and to the young ladies from St. Agnes who baked the cookies for our workers out of gratitude.



"I want that bag of cookies," says one of the MLGW employees who discovered the St. Agnes cookie drop at NSC and the two students who delivered the tasty homemade treats.



MLGW workers at Hickory Hill returned from working in the field to find a rather pleasant surprise – two St. Agnes students and a table full of tasty, home-baked cookies to thank them for their Ice Storm Landon restoration efforts.

United Way Big Check

MLGW's United Way Campaign presented a big check for \$661,829.63 to United Way President Dr. Kenneth Robinson at the March 2 MLGW Board meeting. MLGW's United Way Steering Committee was present and recognized, then the check was presented by Campaign Chair **Chantal Lairy**, Cust. Exp. & Market Analysis, and Co-Chair **Taurus Bradford**, Water Dist. - NSC. The Steering Committee then posed for photos in MLGW's Administration Bldg. garden with Dr. Robinson.

After the Big Check presentation, members of our campaign Steering Committee organized a Key Person Appreciation Day for the key people who helped their respective areas organize United Way contributions. Held in the Administration Bldg. lobby, Key Persons were given gift cards in gratitude for their hard work. No Key Person Appreciation Luncheon was held in January due to a continuing pandemic which has sickened 30 percent of MLGW employees.



MLGW United Way Campaign co-chairs, the Steering Committee and United Way's President Dr. Kenneth Robinson pose with MLGW's Big Check after the Board presentation.

*MLGW's United Way Campaign Key Persons received a gift certificate in appreciation for their hard work. Holding her gift card is **Shekeva Addison**, Commerc. Res. Ctr., next to Campaign Chair **Chantal Lairy**.*



*Set up in MLGW's Administration Bldg. lobby, MLGW United Way Campaign leaders recognized and thanked Key Persons. Signing in for his gift card is (l) **Steve Frank**, Bldg. Constr. & Maint., greeted by (l-r) **Chantal Lairy** and **Kelsey Seiter**, Bus. Proc. Engrng.*

Volunteer Spotlight

Derek Mitchell: A Man of Many Talents

Memphis students' faces light up with fascination and interest as they learn what makes our utility "tick" from the guy who built all the demonstration props that are holding them spellbound. It's a STEAM day or career day, and these kids are learning, and really enjoying it. Making it interesting is **Derek Mitchell**, the guy who built the props. He's a man of many talents and loves to share them. He's been everywhere man!!

Starting in Corrosion Control and Cathodic Protection, Derek joined MLGW in July 2006. "Yeah, in 2006, someone called me up, asked me would I be interested in working for MLGW," he recalls. "Another person saw my application and recommended me. The rest is history." He has also worked in several other areas in the Division. He moved to Electric Ops as an Electronic Instrumentation Technician, then he went to Power and Reliability as an Associate Electrical Engineer. He was hired by Clint Richardson, now retired, to join Residential Services as a Residential Energy Technician. After working in that department, Derek finally settled where he is now, Water Engineering and Operations as an Electronic Instrumentation Technician.

Before coming to MLGW, he completed a four-year Electrical Apprenticeship at IBEW LOCAL 474, then he continued his education, going back to school yet again. This time he went to State Tech (now Southwest Tennessee Community College), and earned three degrees in Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering and Telecommunications Engineering. WHEW!

Before joining MLGW, Derek worked in a very diverse background. He was a Licensed Electrician, working for various Electrical Contractors. He worked as a Paralegal for the Tennessee Dept. of Child Services, and he also worked as a Maintenance Mechanic for the Shelby County Sheriff's Department. As one of Jehovah's Witnesses, he also got involved in lots of volunteer work, most notably building 20+ Kingdom Halls, many built



Derek Mitchell

in the '80s and '90s in the Memphis area. Derek also had the privilege of working on and remodeling what is the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses located on Cleveland in Midtown (formerly known as the Crosstown Theatre). Each of the Kingdom Halls that he worked on took only four days to build. That's a great background, and he gained experience in construction and electrical work that he would put to good use in the future.

"I learned about volunteering and helping others when a man named Lawrence Straughter studied the Bible with me as a teenager, around

1979." Derek remembers how Mr. Straughter loved to do volunteer work. "He also taught me how to do construction and maintenance work along with a host of teenagers," recalls Derek. "I come from a very large family – 15 kids! Mr. Straughter was always there, helping us out and taking us with him to do volunteer work on the Kingdom Hall. That's how I got into doing volunteer work, and I will always remember and appreciate him."

"I've been to a lot of places," says Derek. "I've even done electrical construction work at our World Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York City and surrounding areas. Currently, I work with the Tennessee Regional Building Committee, teaching and training Electrical Maintenance and Safety to volunteers in the southwest part of Tennessee. But I have done volunteer work assignments in other states. Some volunteer disaster projects that I worked on entailed going to Augusta, Georgia, helping to rebuild Kingdom Halls and Homes after a flood came through and wiped out several buildings and neighborhoods. I also got a chance to volunteer when Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. I am very thankful for my wife's company and assistance during these projects; she has been a tremendous help. We have been at this as a volunteer couple since 1988," he adds proudly. What a great relationship.

(continued on page 8)

One of his early volunteer experiences before arriving at MLGW was building a wheelchair accessibility ramp in 2000 for a lady named Angela McGowan. She was handicapped and confined to her house, and she had no ramp for her wheelchair to get out of her house. She approached MLGW's Wil Williams (retired) and Beverly Phillips (deceased, and truly missed) for assistance. MLGW said they would donate the materials if she could come up with a crew to do the work. "What's a lady to do if she has no crew?" Derek asks.

Angela made a phone call to Derek, and he got busy. He and some congregational volunteers ("Shout out to retired former MLGW employees Lopez Ward and Sheilah Straughter," Derek adds.) with several teenage volunteers got down to it and built the lady a ramp. "Those same teenage volunteers were clamoring for more projects to do," Derek recalls. "Teenagers are full of energy and ready to volunteer. We built the wheelchair ramp enabling Angela to attend college, as a computer programmer and attend her congregational meetings as a Jehovah's Witnesses minister. EVERYONE was happy!" It was his introduction to MLGW's Residential Services area and everyone in the department including Clint Richardson remembered him.

While working in Residential Services, a friend of Derek's, "Lonzo," unfortunately became non-ambulatory and needed a wheelchair accessibility ramp built, too. Once more MLGW provided the materials, and Derek provided a crew of volunteer workers from different congregations, having fun and teaching them as they got the work done. The experience would "bode" him well later in his MLGW career while working in Residential

Services as he was heavily involved with several wheelchair ramp-building projects for the Division. He has also done a lot of weatherizing, repair and other construction projects with the department, usually helping out people who were in need.

Much of Derek's volunteer efforts these days involve talking to students at local schools' career days or STEAM events, explaining the science and engineering while giving advice to those students interested in utility careers. He's been doing that since he first arrived at MLGW. It's inspiring to the students – you can see their eyes light up as Derek demonstrates, using those special props he built himself.

"Yeah, I made all the demo stuff for local school STEAM events," says Derek. A long-term project he's doing for **Beverly Perkins**, Corporate Social Responsibility, is a "kid-powered bicycle generator" for school kids. "Hopefully I will get to it sooner than later," he promises. "I built the demo stuff back in 2008. I built items like the 'Electrical Briefcase' (Thanks to MLGW's **Brian Wilson** of Central Shops!), and a meter box demonstrator which is a trainer for the kids. It shows them how power is consumed and measured. It is so rewarding to help them learn and be fascinated by it all!"

Any volunteer advice for the rest of us? "There's more happiness in giving than receiving," Derek says. "There's more reward to be had in helping others! I've come to learn that a lot of people need help, and there's a ton of reward in helping them." Truer words were never spoken.....



Derek and Nathalie Quiroz, Water Meter Shop, at Arlington Middle School STEAM Day.



Derek demonstrates electric insulated gloves to students. They're used to keep our line workers safe from electric shock.

2022 Summer Volunteer Fundraising Calendar

Join your co-workers and volunteer for these fun and rewarding MLGW spring volunteer events. Since some events may still be affected due to COVID-19 developments, be sure to check with the event contact. Contact information is listed by each event below with contacts' email addresses active – just click on them. 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!

June 2022

- Annual Juneteenth Urban Music Festival – Saturday - Sunday, June 18-19. Health Sciences Park, Madison at S. Dunlap. Contact: **Ken Mack**, Corporate Social Responsibility, 528-4820 or kmack@mlgw.org
- The Mid-South Airshow – Saturday - Sunday, June 18-19, 10:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. Millington-Memphis Airport. Gates open at 8 a.m. each day. Contact: **Tanya Becton**, Corporate Social Responsibility, 528-4820 or tbecton@mlgw.org

July 2022

- Volunteer events TBA.

September 2022

- Delta Fair – September 2-11 (to be confirmed). Agricenter International. Volunteers needed to staff MLGW booth. Contact: **Ken Mack**, Corporate Social Responsibility, 528-4820 or kmack@mlgw.org

Volunteer your time and give back to our community.

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

Africa in April

Greeting Africa in April attendees, MLGW volunteers staffed an informational booth by the entrance to the Africa in April Cultural Festival in Church Park at Beale Street for three spring days, April 22-24. Greeting visitors on Sunday afternoon were **Felicia Hall**, N. Community Ofc.; **Joyce Taylor**, Compens. HRIS Svcs.; and Joyce's granddaughter Nabriya Gibson – who knew all the energy-saving info and helped the lucky wheel spinners trying to win LED light bulbs. Africa in April honored Ghana this year, and the crowds were enjoying colorful booths and good music.



*On a nice April afternoon, MLGW volunteers **Felicia Hall** (l), **Joyce Taylor** (r) and Joyce's granddaughter Nabriya welcome Africa in April visitors and give them energy-saving and utility assistance information.*

901 Connect

Radio Ambiente and several non-profits partnered to present 901 Connect, an informational event for Shelby County's Latino community on May 1. Radio Ambiente invited MLGW to participate in 901 Connect, and we presented information in Spanish and even a volunteer who speaks Spanish. It was an opportunity for the local Hispanic community to meet, ask questions, and learn about the missions and services offered by local non-profits and government agencies. **Gaston Moulin**, Corporate Social Responsibility, worked our table and

distributed important information about our services, conservation advice and safety tips – all in Spanish. There were more than 20 different organizations represented, including the recruiting areas of the Memphis Police Department and the Memphis Fire Department. Radio Ambiente and the Amigos Foundation hosted the event at their Salón Monarca location. Multiple bilingual representatives and interpreters were available at the event.



***Gaston Moulin**, MLGW's go-to guy for Spanish language translations, brochures in Spanish and much of our outreach to our Latino community, talks to visitors to 901 Connect. Probably in Spanish...*

Home Show

MLGW volunteers once again staffed a booth at the Mid-South Home Show from February 25-27 at the Agricenter International. MLGW is always a vital asset to the Home Show and our volunteers answered questions about saving energy, utility bill assistance, and home electric and natural gas safety. Visitors also had the opportunity to spin the wheel for a prize – an LED lightbulb – by trying to land on MLGW's suggested thermostat settings for winter (68 degrees) and summer (78 degrees) – settings that save money and energy.



*Ready to answer your questions about home energy-saving approaches at the Mid-South Home Show are (l-r) **Tamara Nolen**, Corp. Comms.; **Sandra Jackson**, Cust. Care Residential Ctr.; and **Calvaretta Smith**, Water Engrng. & Ops.*



Feeling lucky? Smiling MLGW booth visitors spin the lucky wheel to land on either 68 or 78 and win an LED light bulb. The energy-saving info, of course, is free. Good luck!

Volunteers In Power 2022 Nominees Chosen

Nominees for the second annual VIP Volunteer Awards have been communicated in our Weekly Bulletin to MLGW employees for voting which starts in mid-June and lasts through August. We'll send out the nominee names and voting info in the Weekly Bulletin when it's time to choose winners for the following:

- Spirit Effort Award & Volunteer of the Year: **TBD**
- Spirit Early Bird Award: **TBD**
- Spirit Glue Award: **TBD**
- Spirit Service Award: **TBD**
- Spirit Go-Getter Award: **TBD**
- Service Organization Volunteer Award: **TBD**
- Volunteer Leader of the Year (Supervisors & above): **TBD**



To vote for your favorite volunteer, you'll be able to check out the nominees online and make your choices. Voting information and a link will be sent out soon in the Weekly Bulletin.

Frayser Pantry: The rain glimmer as cars full of hungry folks line up to receive donated food lined up on the pavement at MLGW's Frayser Mobile Food Pantry. **Al Hardy**, Physical Security, helps point the families' cars and SUVs in the right direction to be loaded up by our MLGW volunteers and State Troopers.



Training Center Pantry:

That's what we do, serve you! Serving up food to hungry families is part of our efforts to help customers in need due to a pandemic and high costs caused by inflation. Our volunteers are dedicated to helping 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.



Soulsville: Silhouetted in front of a salon in the heart of Soulsville, MLGW volunteers carry bags of energy-saving goodies for area residents.

Soulsville: VP of Engineering and Operations **Nick Newman** hands a useful energy-saving kit to a grateful Soulsville resident.



Arlington STEAM: MLGW volunteers **Derek Mitchell**, Water Plant Maintenance Supply Ops, and **Nathalie Quiroz**, Water Meter Shop, show Arlington students the science and engineering behind MLGW's utility service at Arlington Middle School's STEAM day on Thursday, April 28. Derek is also this issue's Volunteer Spotlight (pp. 7-8).



Walking with Heart: MLGW Commissioner **Mitch Graves** receives his Top 5 Walker plaque from WMC-TV meteorologist Ron Childers in front of FedExForum after the Heart Walk.

Volunteer Views



Food Security: Sometimes it makes you just want to holler! Helping people out at the Mobile Food Pantry is a great thing, and our Physical Security team members, including (l-r) Officers **Alvin Crook**, **Chester Torry**, **David Armstrong** (Revenue Protection), **Ronald Copeland** and **Jeff Henderson**, are always there for us. Many thanks!



Training Center Pantry: We are very grateful for the troop of State Troopers who helped at the Food Pantry at our Training Center on February 8.

Chelsea Pantry: Crates loaded with gallons and gallons of wholesome whole milk were ready to be loaded in the family cars of North Memphians by our MLGW volunteers.



Chelsea Pantry: Once the Mid-South Food Bank trucks unloaded their donated food, cars began to flow through MLGW's Chelsea Mobile Food Pantry. **Brad Chandler**, Garage - NSC, directs traffic as families' cars and SUVs enter the loading area for much-needed food.