

The Huntsville Times

Saturday, June 4, 2011

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FINDING OUR GOOD PEOPLE

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Village of Promise works to eradicate poverty in city

Bobby Bradley grew up in a segregated South.

She attended an all-black private school, St. Joseph's Catholic mission in Huntsville, until it, along with Huntsville City Schools, integrated in September 1963.

After finishing the eighth grade there, Bradley attended Council Training school for blacks in Madison County her freshman year. In 1965, she transferred to Butler High School as a sophomore. "No one spoke to us," said Bradley, who refused to let the cold-shoulder treatment define her. She became the first African-American inducted into the National Honor Society at Butler, where she graduated in 1967.

She went on to graduate from Vanderbilt, where she majored in math and computer science.

Bradley believes her education at all levels provided more than book knowledge and she credits her teachers and counselors with playing "a significant role" in her life.

"It gave me the foundation to make me who I am today," said Bradley, a successful businesswoman who helped found Computer Systems Technology in 1989 and sold the 900-employee company to SAIC in 2003.

Now she wants to give back.

Bradley and her friend, community activist Gloria Batts, have started the Village of Promise in hopes of "eradicating poverty throughout Huntsville one neighborhood at a time."

Bradley, chair of the Village of Promise

Want to help?

To contribute to the Village of Promise, send donations, payable to The Community Foundation, to 659 Gallatin St., Huntsville, AL 35801, and earmark it Village of Promise. For more information on the Village of Promise, visit villagepromise.com, email info@villagepromise.com, or call 256-536-8052.

Know a good person?

To nominate someone for *The Times* "Good People" feature, email City Editor Shelly Haskins at shelly.haskins@htimes.com or call him at 256-532-4424.



Bobby Bradley, left, started the Village of Promise through the Community Foundation. Lynn Berry, right, is the foundation's executive director. (The Huntsville Times/Dave Dieter)

school programs.

The Village of Promise has filed application papers to become a 501(c3) group, but still waiting to receive its non-profit status. In the meantime, the fledgling organization has joined hands with the Community Foundation, which will work with the group to collect donations on its behalf.

"We believe in this organization," said Community Foundation Executive Director Lynne Berry. "Bobby and Gloria have shown leadership to get this initiative going. They are doing great work."

Bradley said the group will focus on four key areas: education, health and welfare, housing and communities. It's still forming its action plan, but tutoring and mentoring and education in low-income areas will be a big part, she said.

The organization will be looking for financial help from public and private contributions, through grants and fundraisers.

board, hopes to address the needs of children and families in low-income neighborhoods throughout the city. The program is based on the same principles as the Harlem Children's Zone, a network to help children break the cycle of generational poverty. It was founded by Geoffrey Canada, who made the documentary, "Waiting on Superman."

"We are just a microcosm of what Geoffrey has done," said Bradley, who is "thrilled" Canada will be in Huntsville Sept. 22 to speak at a luncheon at the Von Braun Center, a fundraiser for Village of Promise.

Bradley said she was got a close look at today's poverty in Huntsville after becoming involved in the Lincoln Village program. For several years, many church groups have been working to change the Lincoln community by remodeling homes and tutoring children in after-

Village of Promise
200 Pratt Avenue
Suite B-2,
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villagepromise.com
256-536-8052

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Presents
Lunch with GEOFFREY CANADA

September 22, 2011

11:30 a.m.

VBC North Hall

\$50 per person

Table sponsorships available

Tickets may be purchased:

Online - villagepromise.com

By Phone - 256-536-8052

By Mail - Check made payable to Village of Promise

*200 Pratt Avenue Suite B-2,
Huntsville, AL 35801*

Reservations MUST be purchased by September 14, 2011

Dietary requests available



“Children are the hands of which we take hold of heaven” Henry Ward Beecher

*“What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has the eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men.”
Saint Augustine*



Book Drive by Village of Promise committee members for children affected by 2011 tornadoes

Village of Promise Partners

Alabama A & M University
Calhoun Community College
Even Start Family Literacy Program
Heart of the Valley YMCA
Huntsville City Schools
Huntsville Housing Authority
New Beginnings Church
100X Church
University of Alabama Huntsville
University Place Elementary School

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About Geoffrey Canada

Leading HCZ In Its Work With Inner-City Children

Mr. Canada grew up in the South Bronx in a poor, sometimes violent neighborhood. Despite his troubled surroundings, Mr. Canada was able to succeed academically, receiving a bachelor of arts degree from Bowdoin College and a master's degree in education from the Harvard School of Education. After graduating from Harvard, Mr. Canada decided to work to help children who, like himself, were disadvantaged by their lives in poor, embattled neighborhoods.


In his 20-plus years with Harlem Children's Zone, Geoffrey Canada has become nationally recognized for his pioneering work helping children and families in Harlem and as a passionate advocate for education reform.

Since 1990, Mr. Canada has been the President and Chief Executive Officer for Harlem Children's Zone, which *The New York Times Magazine* called "one of the most ambitious social experiments of our time." This year, Mr. Canada was named to *Time Magazine's* list of *The 100 Most Influential People in the World*.

In 1997, the agency launched the Harlem Children's Zone Project, which targets a specific geographic area in Central Harlem with a comprehensive range of services. The Zone Project today covers 100 blocks and aims to serve over 10,000 children.

The *New York Times Magazine* said the Zone Project "combines educational, social and medical services. It starts at birth and follows children to college. It meshes those services into an interlocking web, and then it drops that web over an entire neighborhood... The objective is to create a safety net woven so tightly that children in the neighborhood just can't slip through."

The work of Mr. Canada and HCZ has become a national model and has been the subject of many profiles in the media. Their work has been featured on "60 Minutes," "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "The Today Show," "Good Morning America," "Nightline," "CBS This Morning," "The Charlie Rose Show," National Public Radio's "On Point," as well in articles in *The New York Times*, *The New York Daily News*, *USA Today* and *Newsday*.

 *Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice.* Nelson Mandela

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For many children in Huntsville Alabama, prison is the 13th grade...

Village of Promise

When many states project how many prison beds it will need, it factors the number of children who read poorly in 4th grade. Huntsville is not immune to poverty and 75% of children whose parents who did not complete high school live in poverty. *Village of Promise* pledges to break that vicious cycle.

The link between academic failure and violence and crime is welded together to reading failure.

Inspired by the innovative work of Geoffrey Canada's *Harlem Children's Zone* and Lincoln Village Ministries, *Village of Promise* in Huntsville was the result of a passion of Gloria Batts, community activist and Bobby Bradley, founder of Computer Systems Technology, Inc.

They saw heart breaking poverty and poor educational standards in Huntsville up close, carefully sought out innovative solutions and found it in Canada's exciting work, highlighted in the movie "Waiting for Superman".

Village of Promise will provide wrap around services for underserved children in high poverty areas from birth through college. The first target area of services will be University Place Elementary School. In collaboration with our partners, Village of Promise will be on the cutting edge of educational reform in Huntsville.

Village of Promise will "show up" with volunteers in the neighborhoods and schools to provide services such as early childhood education, health care, housing assistance, tutoring and mentoring. Every child in their pipeline will be nurtured to succeed in school and his progress will be documented and recorded to track the effectiveness of the program as Mr. Canada has done.

"He who opens a school door, closes a prison" Victor Hugo

Village of Promise is a nonprofit corporation established to eradicate generational poverty one neighborhood at a time. Every child who remains in the Village of Promise pipeline will graduate from college.

For more information

Village of Promise, Inc.

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