HELLO FROM BMH’S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JOHN SHUGHART FROM ORLANDO, FL JOINED THE BMH TEAM IN MAY AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Over the past 8 months, I have fully transitioned into my role as Executive Director of Bahamas Methodist Habitat. I hit the ground running in late May, learning the interworkings of BMH while managing the busiest summer on record. It was such a joy to work alongside all the volunteer teams, summer staff, and local staff that joined us to make a real impact on the island of Eleuthera. Shortly after the summer, category four hurricane Joaquin devastated the southern Bahamas and I was thrown full force into the disaster relief side of BMH. We were fortunate that the storm missed Eleuthera, but we are still working to restore some hope for our neighbors in the South.

Prior to coming to BMH I worked for a year with the Federal Emergency Management Agency through an AmeriCorps program, completing administrative work for disaster closeouts and planning projects. I graduated from Florida State University with a degree in political science, with a concentration in emergency management, and a minor in entrepreneurship. My true passion is working with like-minded individuals to find creative ways to serve others and solve problems. I have also worked in youth ministry, construction ministry, and with a variety of different nonprofits. I am originally from Orlando, Florida, so moving to Eleuthera was not too far and being near the water always feels like home to me.

I have truly enjoyed getting to know everyone here in Eleuthera and I cannot express enough gratitude for the kindness I have been shown since I arrived. I would love to focus on building the capacity of BMH to serve deeper in the communities we already touch and wider throughout The Bahamas.

Please feel free to reach out to me via email, bmhjohn3@gmail.com.

John Shughart
Executive Director
Bahamas Methodist Habitat

SUMMER, FALL AND WINTER 2015 TEAMS

Columbus FUMC // Columbus, MS
Vidalia FUMC // Vidalia, GA
Hazel Green UMC // Hazel Green, AL
St. James UMC // Atlanta, GA
Lanier UMC // Cumming, GA
Providence UMC // Quinton, VA
UMC of Steamboat Springs // Steamboat Springs, CO
FUMC Homestead // Homestead, FL
Griffin District // North GA Conference
Newburg UMC // Livonia, MI
Aldersgate UMC // Wichita, KS
Glen Memorial // Atlanta, GA
Johns Creek UMC // John's Creek, GA
Dunwoody UMC // Dunwoody, GA
Polk Street UMC // Amarillo, TX
St. Marks UMC // Atlanta, GA
Christ Church UMC // Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Forest Hills UMC // Brentwood, TN
FUMC Orlando // Orlando, FL
Salkehatchie // Columbia, SC
Plainfield UMC // Plainfield, IL
FUMC Sebring // Sebring, FL
FUMC Covington // Covington, GA
Cascade UMC // Atlanta, GA
Mansfield UMC // Mansfield, GA
Fly-In // Bahamas Habitat Group
Lone Star Group // Magnolia, TX
Shepherd of the Hills UMC // St. George, UT
McLaurin Heights UMC // Pearl, MS
Mack Family // Swansea, SC
Shayne’s Playground

In July, Bahamas Methodist Habitat hosted a team from John’s Creek UMC as they constructed a playground for the Primary School in James Cistern. Sara Cleland of John’s Creek UMC designed the project for her Scouting Gold Award. Sara collaborated with Mighty Swings, Inc. on the playground materials and raised the funds to ship the materials to the island.

Sara and the JCUMC team then came down to Eleuthera in July to put it all together. Shayne’s Playground was dedicated on July 30th.

Seven months later, the kids are still in love with it.

Current Island

This past summer at Current Island, volunteer teams replaced the siding and painted the home of the Thompson family and painted the exterior of the Manse. Teams also built picnic tables for Zion Children’s Home and hosted a Vacation Bible School for the children.

School Supplies for James Cistern Students

In August, BMH received over 40 backpacks and sets of school supplies to deliver to James Cistern students just in time for the new school year. Many thanks to Salkehatchie and Virginia Wingate UMC for their support of our JC students!

James Cistern - Nebert Johnson’s House

Through the summer and the fall, BMH teams installed windows, doors, and electricity and painted the exterior of Mr. Johnson’s house. He is now able to safely live there.

Day Volunteers

In October, The Powell Family, coming into Nassau on a cruise, contacted BMH about doing a day of service in the community instead of their cruise’s planned excursion. We were happy to connect them with the Bilney Lane Children’s Home in Nassau.

If you are interested in volunteering for a day like the Powell family, visit our ‘One Day Volunteer Opportunities’ page.

Hurricane Joaquin Relief

Following Hurricane Joaquin at the end of September, BMH was called to assess the impact and needs of a number of southern family islands including Crooked Island. The BMH team returned to Crooked Island in November to clean up debris in the primary school yard and at the airport.

Special shout-out to Shepherd of the Hills UMC for bringing 13 suitcases of donations when they came in November

James Cistern Angel Tree Project

This Christmas, BMH recruited the help of former volunteers to raise funds and purchase gifts for children in James Cistern. With your contributions, we were able to deliver gifts to 63 kids in the settlement.

Special shout-outs to Marilee Cleland from Johns Creek UMC for setting up our Sign-up Genius page and to Connor Hilton, 17, from Mansfield UMC for his generous donation of $300 to complete our Christmas shopping list. See our Facebook page for a complete list of those who supported our Angel Tree Project.

South Eleuthera

BMH volunteers and staff worked to get Santeesha into her home in Wemyss Bight for Christmas. She was so excited to finally move in with her three boys.
David and Linda Byers joined the BMH staff as long term volunteers in January of 2015. Although they’re well known figures at Camp Symonette, we don’t believe they’ve ever been formally introduced.

David and Linda come to us from Lancaster, Pennsylvania and are proud members of the Church of the Brethren. They felt a call in exchange students, and working in youth ministry. She serves as the BMH volunteer coordinator. David and Linda can often be seen around Camp, hosting volunteer teams, taking care of the grounds and gardens, and singing the Sound of Music.

Their dog, Sugar, has graciously accepted the title of Camp dog.

In December, David and Linda’s son Mason joined them in Eleuthera. Mason is a student in Landscape Design and works in our garden. He is also a bread-maker extraordinaire, and has made us loaf upon loaf of cinnamon raisin, garlic herb, and sandwich bread. Mason plans to stay with us until March.

Since David and Linda have spent over a year on Eleuthera, we asked them about some of their Bahamian favorites. David loves Miss Lee’s Cracked Chicken while Linda is a big fan of Guava Cheesecake Ice Cream. Linda’s favorite experience in Eleuthera so far has been touching a live seahorse at Sweetings Pond. David’s favorite experience has been attending the Taste of Eleuthera and hearing Dr. Seabreeze play live.

If you’re interested in serving with BMH as a long term volunteer, please see the Volunteer page on our website!

Miss Leona Johnson, better known as “Miss Lee” provides BMH with delicious evening meals from her own kitchen at Lee’s Café. All day long she is hard at work cooking lunches for her guests at the café; however, late afternoons are dedicated to cooking for our teams. We often bless her hands during our evening grace.

Leona is a member of the JC Wesley Methodist Church. She opened her café in February of 2001. Miss Lee has two children and both of them work alongside of her at the D&D Service Station. Teams often get to stop by on “Free Night” or after Bible study to grab a snack or ice cream treat. Miss Lee loves to laugh. She describes herself as fun loving and happy. We all enjoy her Mac & Cheese and Curry Chicken – regular provisions at Camp. Miss Lee is a person we rarely see around Camp Symonette but her presence is known to almost all of our volunteers.
We are truly grateful to have hosted over 600 volunteers in the year 2015. We would especially like to highlight the spectacular service and contribution of the Aldersgate UMC of Wichita, Kansas.

We want to share some highlights of how one congregation was inspired to participate in their international mission trip. Jordan McFall, Pastor of Missions and Outreach at the Aldersgate UMC in Wichita, Kansas told us how he did it.

In Jordan’s words – “Every month our church does a mission collection for an organization. Because our church was sending a team to serve with BMH, we decided it would be good to designate one of those collections to be for BMH. We decided instead of asking people to buy random tools, it could be a great opportunity to do a unique collection. We knew BMH had a wish list on Amazon and so we decided to use that to collect tools. We set up a “ladder tree” where we had tags cut out in the shape of suitcases hanging from it with twine and clothespins. Each tag had a label on one side giving instructions of what to do, and on the other, the label listed a tool, the cost and the priority level. Individuals could then take a tag, write a check or put cash with it and drop it into the locked box. At the end of the month, we then went on Amazon and purchased all of the tools. For some of the bigger items, Sunday School classes went in together to purchase them. Also, if any items were no longer available or purchased by the time we went to purchase them, we just used that money to buy another tool.”

Their congregation raised over $5,500 to purchase over 75 tools for BMH.

We are so grateful for their contribution to our ministry and to their work as volunteers.

If you feel inspired to make an in-kind donation to BMH, please visit our Amazon Wish List!

AMY ROBERTSON SHARES HER BMH EXPERIENCE

Working with Bahamas Methodist Habitat for eleven weeks was truly an experience that changed my life. Each day had an endless amount of opportunities to grow. Looking at BMH and the type of work we do, I’m sure you can relate somehow when I say that summer is our busiest time of year. But the interns continued to find time for exploring and going on some incredible adventures. Just a few included finding hidden beaches, running eight miles to a beach (we thought was maybe just a few miles away), sunrise walks, swimming with turtles, swimming in caves, and even road tripping two hours in the back of a work van to Lighthouse Beach. Can you believe that was just our downtime?

In addition to our downtime we had a lot of hard work! Deep cleaning camp, working in the garden, cleaning the chicken coop, going on water runs for the worksite, and the list goes on. There were the days we would wake up at 5:00am to assist in the kitchen and there were also days we would stay up until midnight

singing our hearts away in the breezeway. Through all of these incredible experiences, my heart continues to grow as I practice the Bahamian lifestyle here in the states.

If you have yet to serve with BMH, I highly encourage you to take a step of faith and be prepared for an incredible experience. Does that idea seem a little out of reach right now? Then I challenge you, when speaking with someone today, tomorrow or the next day, try your best to make them the most important person. This is a practice I think we could all grow from, make the person in front of you the most important person.
DEDICATION OF THE GARY LONDON VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE

2015 changed the landscape of BMH forever. Driving down the lane from the backroad of James Cistern, volunteers and visitors are now witness to a new ministry beginning to take shape in the form of a NEW BUILDING on the grounds of Camp Symonette.

It has been quite a saga for the 2,400 square foot building once located on Harbour Island. The structure was donated by the owners, the Dicke family from Ohio. The plan was funded with a generous $100,000 donation by Marleta London in memory of her late husband, Gary. Disassembled by a volunteer group from Alabama, the steel and metal parts were floated across the bay from Harbour Island to be delivered to their new home at Camp Symonette.

Beginning in March of 2015, staff, employees, contractors, and volunteers from Bahamas Methodist Habitat put hands and feet to the vision. Staff laid the foundation. Local contractors poured the slab. Ed Hutter, a volunteer contractor from Covington UMC in Georgia, led the effort to erect the structure. BMH staff and crew of employees enclosed the building. The Covington team returned to add wiring and plumbing. Volunteers from Cascade UMC, Shepherd of the Hills, Mansfield UMC, McLaurin Heights UMC, Western PA Annual Conference and BMH staff have worked to complete the interior.

The completed building will hold vocational training classrooms, meeting room/kitchenette, bathrooms (with showers), tools, machinery and supply storage for tool and building materials. The mechanic’s bay even incorporates a grease pit for the future auto mechanics curriculum.

It has been said that many hands make light work. Many persons have passed this dream from one hand to the next, each adding to the goal. The Gary London Vocational Training Center has come to fruition through the efforts of many dedicated hands and caring hearts with the intent to provide vocational opportunities for the people of The Bahamas.

Bahamas Habitat President, Steve Merritt, shared “It’s really exciting to see this building become a reality.” Bahamas Habitat enabled acquisition of the building, coordinated the move and construction, and provided invaluable project management and coaching. The non-profit also plans to help Camp Symonette program the center with courses and instructors. “It’s taken time, but all good things do. The best action we can take to support the organization and community is to help folks earn a living. Assistance is temporary, a skill is permanent. That’s what this vocational building will do: teach people a valuable job skill. We’re delighted to be a part of that and thankful for the many volunteers who have made it happen,” Merritt said.

The dedication ceremony for the building was held on October 25th, 2015. Many honored guests of the community attended. BMH hosted a reception for all of the guests after the ribbon cutting and tour of the building. We look forward to growth and expansion of ministry through the use of the Gary London Centre.
NEW YEAR, NEW GOALS, SAME MISSION
FROM NEW VOLUNTEERS, TO NEW PROJECTS, TO FUNDRAISERS
FOR NEW CARS, BMH IS EXCITED ABOUT 2016!

BMH WELCOMES NEW LONG-TERM VOLUNTEER

In mid January, BMH welcomed Hannah Bohn from Conifer, Colorado as a new long-term volunteer. Hannah spent the last seven months of 2015 teaching English in Thailand, during which time she was also able to volunteer in the Philippines and travel to Cambodia.

Hannah is hoping to share her skills in marketing and fundraising to support the BMH mission. She is especially looking forward to spending time with volunteer teams, exploring Eleuthera, and enjoying the beach—she is from the mountains, after all.

Hannah plans to stay as a volunteer until the end of August before she starts graduate school.

BMH IN COVINGTON, GA

On February 4th, Pauline and KP traveled to Atlanta, Georgia on the invitation of Covington First United Methodist Church.

Covington FUMC hosted a fundraiser for BMH’s vehicle fleet on February 6th. Pauline catered the event with her signature Grouper and Curried Chicken. KP delivered a presentation on Bahamas Methodist Habitat and our current need to improve our vehicle fleet.

For more information about our vehicle needs, and to find out how you can support our fleet fund, please visit the ‘Donate’ page on our website.

Stay tuned to find out how much we raised from the event and how the funds will be spent!

RETURN TO CROOKED ISLAND

In late January, John, Steve Merritt of Bahamas Habitat, and LTV David traveled to Crooked Island with Deacon Roderick Pinder, the Vice President of the Bahamas Conference of the Methodist Church. The purpose of their trip was to assess the outstanding needs of the island following the immediate response to Hurricane Joaquin.

John returned with pictures, stories of those who struggle to remain, and ideas. He anticipates that BMH will return to work in Crooked Island before Easter.

VOLUNTEER FEE EXPLAINED

As we kick off 2016, we want to remind everyone about our volunteer fee. This fee ensures sustainable operations year round and employment of local staff. It covers everything from tires and insurance for vehicles, to electric and gas bills, to cell phones and t-shirts.

Price Per Volunteer = $750
Programming $30
Transportation $150
Housing $75
Food $135
Materials $150
Merchandise $15
Administration $150
Contingency $45

*This breakdown is an ESTIMATE of how the volunteer fee is used to cover expenses.

KEEP UP WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Visit us online, apply to volunteer, and support our ministry at methodisthabitat.org