

# CITIES OF JOY

## STRATEGIC PLAN







# The Tragic Problem

“Unraveled” is sadly the current state for many families and communities in our cities.

Regardless of who is president or mayor, or how the economy is doing, the Public Housing communities in NYC and throughout our nation, remain places of deep pain and sorrow. Places without hope or opportunity. **Places where the destiny of most children is statistically sealed before they are ten years old.**

The crisis for these youth and their families is urgent.

Illiteracy, trauma, family dissolution, injustice and deep poverty have filled many communities with anger and despair. The depth and multitude of these sociological epidemics, breeds hopelessness in the hearts of educators and civic leaders.

Healing the Public Housing Crisis is critical for the healing of America’s struggling cities.



# Grasping The NYC Numbers

Stats that ought to shake us...

- Over 1 million people and 250,000 children live in the crosshairs of NYCHA - NYC Housing Authority.
- 80% of the crime and incarceration challenges in NYC are rooted in public and subsidized housing challenges.
- 98% of the children in these communities live in single guardian households.
- 85% of the juvenile offenders of our city are illiterate. 72% of illiterate children have low literacy parents.
- Nearly 40% of boys from NYCHA who drop out of HS will engage in criminal behavior and face incarceration.
- NYC's murder rate is 14x higher on NYCHA property.

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The devastation in NYCHA and public housing is not the result of a self-inflicted wound. The impact of slavery, post Civil War prison/labor camps, Jim Crow South, Red Lining and decades of racially motivated real estate policies, made home ownership nearly impossible for black and brown families. For well over a century, overcrowded and poorly constructed public housing was their only option. Many heroically battled the brutal tide, but thousands of families were swept away by the powerful undercurrents of despair, poverty, addiction, criminality and incarceration.

Well funded, racist, collaborative forces colluded for decades to create today's public housing crisis. We see a clear path to healing our wounded communities but it must be well funded, deeply compassionate, long term and collaborative.



# What Have We Done So Far To Address This Problem?

For the past 30 years our mission and theme song has been: *“to build a house of hope in a world of pain.”*

We have constantly seen devastated communities experience healing and renewal when “the House of the Lord” was built. Murders stop and meaningful restoration begins. For this reason we have been serving passionately in six NYCHA communities and encouraging and equipping churches throughout the Northeast to adopt similarly vulnerable communities. Our strategic plan centers around a collaborative push to plug the “Projects/Poverty to Prison Pipeline.”

**Our goals for each community are:**

- a. to see cohesion in young families**
- b. to end 3rd grade illiteracy**
- c. to reconnect disconnected youth**
- d. to build church centric, collective impact teams that shepherd entire communities towards flourishing.**



Through literacy, sports and community outreach festivals, thousands of children and youth have been meaningfully engaged and mentored. Through our Saturate NYC, Jesus Week and Cities of Joy campaigns, millions of people from over 10 cities have been visited, prayed for and blessed with loving gifts.

Our President and Founder, Pastor David Beidel and his family moved into a blighted neighborhood 30 years ago to share the love and hope of Jesus.

From meager beginnings, the work has grown and evolved to become a multi-city outreach and urban renewal catalyst.

**Urban Hope consistently creates innovative, collaborative, low cost solutions to the daunting challenges of America's blighted cities.**

It has been our great joy to supply over \$50MM of gifts in kind freely to churches and nonprofits to help them to bring hope and relief to troubled neighborhoods, schools and Public Housing Communities.

We have seen the amazing power of parish churches and nonprofits who commit to the long work of community restoration. By encouraging, empowering and equipping these organizations, we see the potential to transform cities that have been devastated for generations.

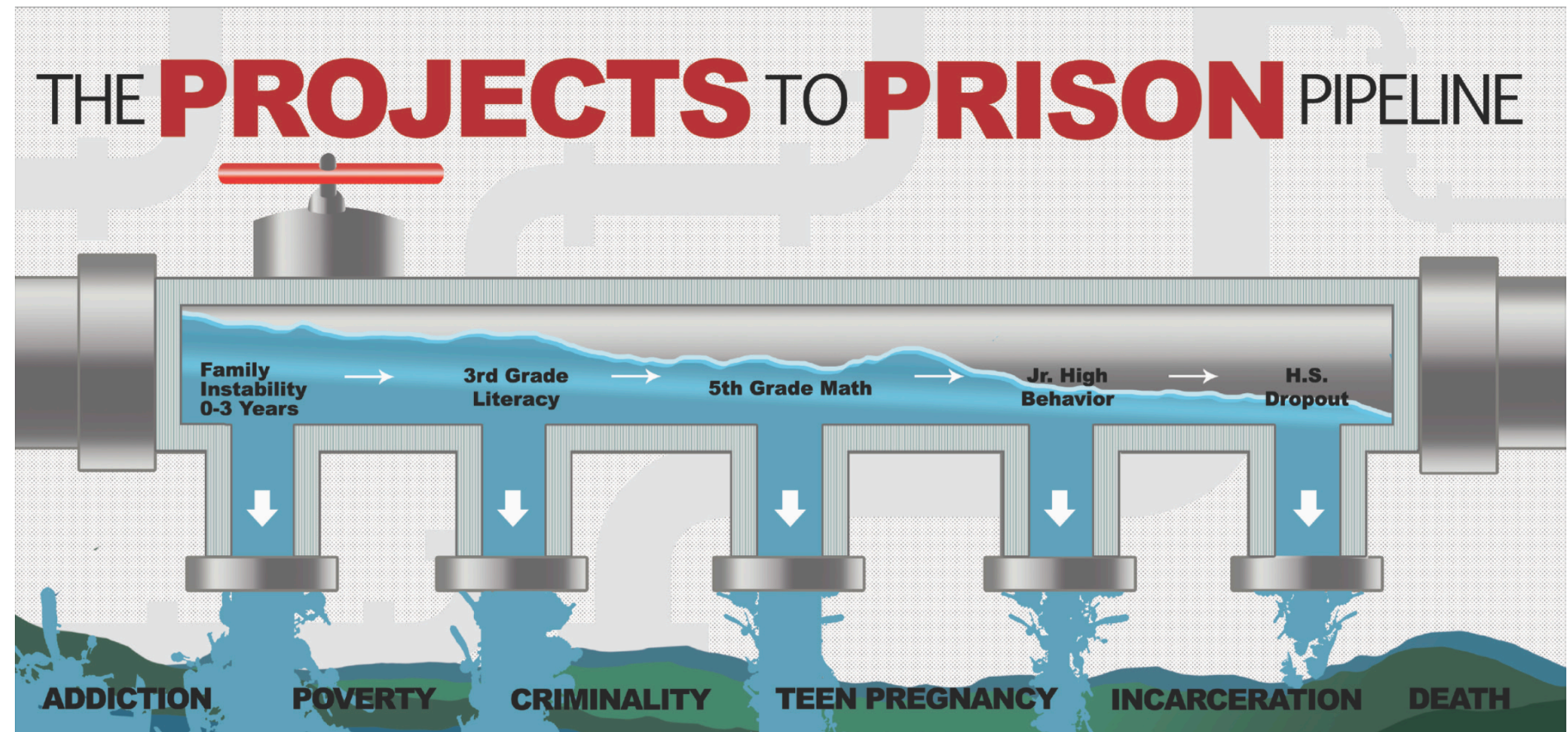


# What Have We Learned That Guides Our Vision Now?

The most inspiring thing we've learned after 30 years of serving in NYC public housing is...when teams of concerned players coordinate to serve together: **Plugging the projects to prison pipeline is not a pipe dream!**

Meaningful coordinated engagement with the five pivotal points in the life of children from high risk neighborhoods can dramatically and positively alter their life trajectory, and that of their communities, forever:

- Family Support
- 3rd Grade Literacy
- 5th Grade Math
- Junior High School Behavior
- High School Graduation and legal advocacy.

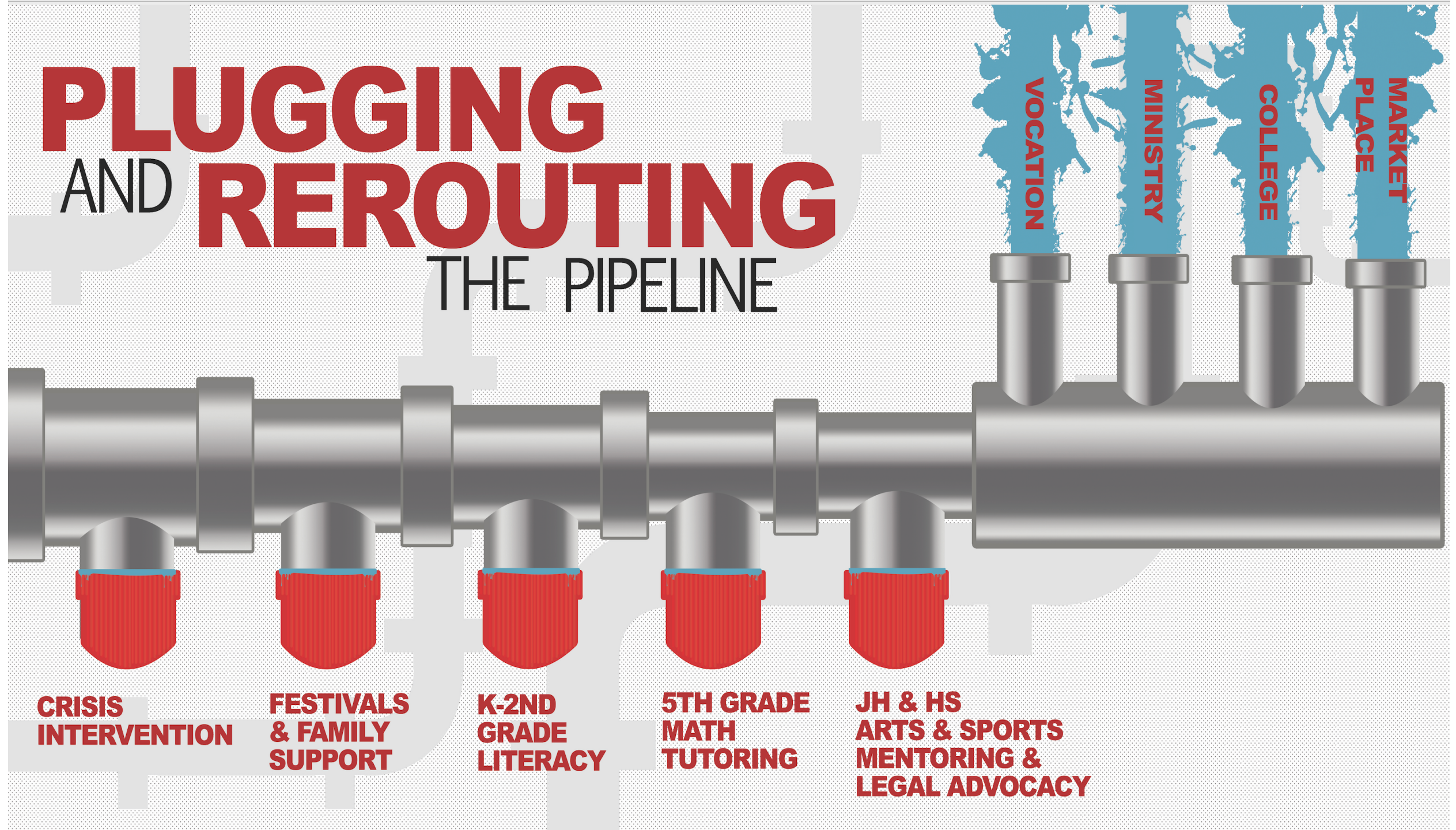


## The “Kevlar” Collective

We have also learned the vital role of the “Kevlar Team”! Kevlar is known as “the thread that stops bullets,” but it can only do so when it is tightly woven together. When our city was unravelling, we began to weave together pastors, principals, public housing leaders, neighborhood stakeholders, medical professionals, nonprofits and community police officers. At the height of the pandemic and racial crisis, when our under resourced communities were at a boiling point, we all served side by side to bring food, hygiene resources, educational assistance, encouragement and hope! Together we began to create loving, “bulletproof” sanctuaries in our struggling neighborhoods. Together we can plug the prison pipeline!



# PLUGGING AND REROUTING THE PIPELINE



## A NEW HOPE

Urban hope has prototyped transformational models for church/nonprofit & public housing partnerships to plug the pipeline.





# CITIES OF JOY CAMPAIGN

The Cities of Joy campaign brings all of the players, strategies and dreams together to plug the prison pipeline.

*Never again will you be called “The Forsaken City” or “The Desolate Land.”  
Your new name will be “The City of God’s Delight”  
...for the LORD delights in you. Isa. 62:4*



# Cities of Joy

We see a clear and sustainable path to transform places of sorrow and fear into Cities of Joy!

- ▶ **Community Team**
  - The Church Team
  - The “Kevlar” Team
- ▶ **Beachhead Events**
  - Crisis intervention
  - Family Festivals
  - Agape Meals
  - Christmas - Joy to the City!
- ▶ **Transformational Programs**
  - Literacy for young families
  - Tutoring for children
  - Mentoring for tweens
  - Advocacy for teens





# COMMUNITY TEAM

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- ANCHOR CHURCH
- KEVLAR TEAM



Churches play a vital role in building the community team.

Healthy churches are natural team builders with an outreach focus. They are intergenerational and often populated with a variety of passionate members who can focus on different portions of the pipeline while keeping view of the long term objectives.



# THE CHURCH TEAM

## 1. NYCHA AMBASSADORS

Coalitions of churches can mobilize boots on the ground, NYCHA ambassadors, to visit households in each building once a month. They will:

- A. Develop Relationships
- B. Survey Community needs/concerns
- C. Pray for each household
- D. Strategize with NYCHA Transformers

*Proximity is key. Until we walk the urine stained hallways of our public housing communities; until we speak to the single mothers who keep an umbrella in their bathroom incase someone above them flushes the toilet, until we are nearly asphyxiated by the dense fog of weed that our elementary school children walk through as they return home from school, until we pray with the isolated and terrified seniors in public housing, we will not be capable to be agents of healing and restoration.*

## 2. NYCHA TRANSFORMERS

Churches can appoint strategic community healers who launch and facilitate transformational programs:

- A. City of Joy Prayer Meetings/Breakfasts - to mobilize and encourage residents.
- B. Family Reading Nights - to break the cycle of generational poverty and family dissolution with parenting enrichment and family literacy.
- C. Sports/Arts Mentoring Programing - to rescue the young and impressionable from the lure of street life. Giving them new role models and positive activities.

# THE KEVLAR TEAM

The partnership between the Church Team and the Kevlar Team is vital. In our experience the K-Team has been comprised of Pastors, Principals, Police, nonProfit's, Public Housing stakeholders, Political Leaders, Physicians, Places of business and Passionate People! This is an amazing *healing force* in any community.

Convening, coordinating, funding and executing community healing masterplans is challenging but mission critical.

One of the great nonprofit thinkers of our day, Dan Perlata, has compared ending poverty to putting a man on the moon:

***"If you study the achievement of the Apollo Program...you begin to understand two things about how we got to the moon...First, we declared an audacious goal...Second, the accomplishment was at its core an unprecedented triumph - not of technology, but of organization, coordination, and collaboration...if we think we are going to solve the social problems in our communities with anything less robust than NASA level coordination and collaboration capacity, we are kidding ourselves."***

Kevlar thread is five times stronger than steel but still incapable of stopping a bullet! Turning powerful individual threads into a bulletproof fabric requires expert weaving. In order to restore the social fabric of unravelled communities, leaders from every sector must take the concept of collective impact to a much higher level.



# Beachhead Events

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- Crisis Intervention
- Family Festivals
- Agape Meals
- Joy to the City Christmas Blessing!



The Church Team and the Kevlar Team work together to facilitate **BEACHHEAD EVENTS**. These powerful high impact initiatives build community trust, nurture important relationships and open doors for transformational programs.



## CRISIS INTERVENTION

Vulnerable communities experience catastrophe at a much deeper level than the general population. Throughout the pandemic crisis, food insecurity, hygiene resource scarcity, educational disruption and heightened violence tore through the already fragile fabric of public housing. Relief efforts and loving festivals are welcomed and received with deep gratitude.

## FAMILY FESTIVALS

Holidays and Summer Family Activities enable the Church and Kevlar Team to plan synchronized activities together and stay in regular contact with the community.

**Summer BBQ's, Jesus Week Events, Back to School Blessings, Fall Festivals, Easter egg Hunts, Vacation Bible Schools...are all wonderful, community blessing initiatives. More creative ideas can be found at [JesusWeekUSA.org](https://JesusWeekUSA.org).**

The tipping point for JOY is closer than many realize. A huge percentage of Public Housing residents want a safe and loving environment for their families. So many of the residents we serve have long and deep relational ties.

## AGAPE MEALS

In the 1st Century, the only time the entirety of the socio-economic spectrum would share a meal together was the Agape Meal, also known as "The Lord's Supper." Our motto for these events is "Breaking Bread to Break Down Walls."

In communities where social ecosystems are frayed, it is critical that community stakeholders are unified to set an example of healthy social structures. Hosting family meals where the powerful and influential sit side by side with the powerless and poor is more than mere symbolism, it is a statement of love, worth and commitment to healing.

At these events we practice intentional listening and are prepared to take action to address the voiced concerns of the families present. For instance, one of the key concerns raised last summer was the surging violence and gang activity among Junior High School youth. Soon after, we were able to launch a Basketball centered youth mentoring program in three neighborhoods in crisis. Currently 27 youth are engaged in a weekly mentoring program.

## JOY TO THE CITY Christmas Outreach

Christmas can be a difficult season for the under resourced and lonely. We just launched one of the largest Christmas outreach initiatives in NYC history, providing over 40,000 gifts and 200,000 books to churches who facilitate loving Christmas parties to vulnerable communities. The goal is to kickstart the adoption of Public Housing neighborhoods and struggling schools everywhere.



# Transformational Programs

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- K-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Literacy
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Math
- JH&HS Youth Mentorship



**Media attention often focuses on violence and social devastation in the lives of youth between the ages of 16 and 24. This is when the devastating seeds of trauma, despair and illiteracy, *which were planted when a child is 1-8 years old*, are fully rooted and matured.**

***Through consistent transformational programming, we can be preemptive and remove the weeds that are strangling the souls of our children at the earliest junctures possible.***



# TRANSFORMATIONAL PROGRAMS:

## K-3rd Grade Literacy and 5th Grade Math

A recent study of ~5.5 million students found that:

**4th grade students from high-poverty schools experienced six times the learning loss in reading compared with the general population.**

**Educational disruption of this magnitude has not been seen since the Great Depression. In an attempt to address this crisis we have broadened the scope of our Literacy department to:**

- **In School Face to Face Tutoring**

This program has been extremely successful. Each student tutored through this initiative advanced 3.4 reading levels. Over 300 children were able to jump the “3rd grade Literacy Hurdle!” This skill attainment will change the trajectory of their lives forever.

- **School Assistance - Virtual Tutoring**

When COVID-19 made in person tutoring impossible, we quickly launched our virtual tutoring program. Over 150 volunteers responded! So far 136 children have been tutored and blessed through this initiative. **We believe this platform will be the key to the 5th grade math challenge.**

- **NYCHA Family Reading Nights**

This year we launched a third arm of the literacy program, “City of Joy Family Reading Nights.” The unique aspect of this initiative is the strategy to assist young parents with their literacy challenges. 72% of low literacy children have low literacy parents. Gently ministering to and educating entire families, will greatly help children educationally and greatly increase bonding between parent and child. We believe that the success of this initiative will greatly reverse the tide of sociological decline in NYCHA.





# JH & HS Sports Based Mentoring

- **Leagues**

Sports leagues, art and music programs are powerful ways to connect with youth for extended periods of time. Community coaches, choir and step dance leaders are often the most important shepherds in a struggling neighborhood. We facilitate basketball leagues (male/female/JH/HS) for all of the NYCHA communities across the North Shore of Staten Island. This has given us great influence in the lives of hundreds of teens as we help them to navigate a multitude of social, educational and vocational challenges.

The highlight of the season is the 5-Borough Invitational championship game which is held at Barclays Center. There is great appreciation from all of the young men and women for the love and effort that is invested in each one of them.

- **Mentoring**

Transitioning from sports/arts to mentoring is critical but challenging. Youth will come mainly for the activity, so “baking” the mentoring into the program ahead of the activity is very important.





# CITIES OF JOY

## STRATEGIC PLAN



*As dozens of churches and organizations come together to build Cities of Joy in many the most broken sociological ecosystems of our nation, we recall the story of the feeding of the five thousand. The task was impossible but Jesus only asked for obedience, sacrifice and faith. He takes the little that we bring and feeds the multitudes.*

*We know that He hears the cries of the children of “Samaria” and has called us to bring them the bread of life and living water. We also know that when we are one, the world will experience in new and profound ways His presence and power.*

*This Cities of Joy blueprint is an opportunity for all of us to demonstrate the unimaginable power of The Church operating in unity for the rescuing of “the least of these.” We pray that you will prayerfully consider joining and/or supporting this endeavor.*

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