

August 2025

# THE BETHEL BEACON



## FROM MANG SONNA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The phrase, ***“Time flies when you’re having fun,”*** couldn’t be truer for us at Bethel Neighborhood Center. This summer was filled with laughter, learning, and unforgettable moments—and it’s all thanks to YOU. Your faithful prayers and generous financial support of our Summer Youth Enrichment Program made this season to be remembered.

Though the program has officially ended, the memories we created will stay with us for a lifetime. From joyful games to meaningful conversations, we saw firsthand how your partnership brings hope and help to our community.

One of my favorite moments this summer happened right in my office. A few curious students stopped by and asked me a flurry of questions:



“How old are you?” “Do you own Bethel?” “How much money do you make?” “Are you rich?” “Can I work here?” And perhaps the most profound of all: ***“Why is Bethel doing all the things you all do?”*** Their questions made me smile—and think deeply. Why do we do what we do? The answer is simple: because we believe in the power of love, community, and transformation. We want every young person who walks through our doors to know they are valued, capable, and full of potential. We want Bethel’s programs and services to leave a lasting imprint on their lives.

Thank you for walking alongside us in this mission. Your support helps us plant seeds of hope that will grow for generations to come. May God bless you!

## A GLIMPSE OF BETHEL’S SUMMER



Summer at Bethel this year was truly an adventure, starting on June 16 and continuing until August 1. During this vibrant period, we welcomed over 100 students into our program. The summer was a resounding success, filled with turning glue into slime, indulging in several boxes of pizza, goldfish, and other snacks. Notably, nearly a quarter of our students were newcomers, highlighting our programs' ability to reach new families and grow. Meanwhile, the significant number of returning students reassures the effectiveness and welcoming nature of our programs at Bethel.

Among the standout activities were trips to the Kansas City Zoo and the Coterie Theater at the Crown Center. The zoo trip, long desired by students but previously limited by funding, became possible this year thanks to partnerships with organizations like UncoverKC. The theater trip provided a unique arts experience for our students.

Over the course of seven weeks, we organized 15 field trips, several lessons and life skill classes, a Conflict Resolution Workshop, and engaged with 102 students. We concluded the summer program by distributing backpacks generously donated by several American Baptist Churches in Kansas City. It was indeed a fantastic summer!

## CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP AT BETHEL

by Hau Leivang, Program Director & Volunteer Coordinator



Pic Source: CHWC Facebook Page

We are delighted to share that our Executive Director, Rev. Dr. Mang Sonna, has been honored with the **Community Champion Award at CHWC's Celebration of Leadership.** This award recognizes individuals whose dedication and service have left a lasting impact on the well-being of our community.

For more than two decades, Rev. Dr. Sonna has faithfully led Bethel with vision, compassion, and a deep commitment to the people of Wyandotte County. His tireless work has touched countless lives, strengthened families, and built bridges across our community. This award is not only a reflection of his remarkable leadership, but also a testament to the trust and respect he has earned as a voice for hope and change.

Upon receiving the award, he humbly shared, ***"I am accepting this award for the dedicated Bethel board, staff, volunteers, and program participants."*** Yet, we at Bethel know that his steadfast guidance and servant leadership have been at the heart of our progress and growth.

We take great pride in celebrating this well-deserved recognition of Rev. Dr. Sonna, not just as a leader of Bethel, but as a true champion for our community. We are grateful to those who nominated him and acknowledged the many ways he has invested in Wyandotte County through his decades of service.

Please join us in congratulating Rev. Dr. Mang Sonna on this incredible honor!

### To Donate or learn more about us...

Bethel Neighborhood Center



14 S 7th St  
Kansas City, KS 66101  
[www.bethelcenter.org](http://www.bethelcenter.org)  
913-371-8218



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## JULY FOOD PANTRY

In July, the growing need for assistance due to food insecurity in our community became increasingly clear. Our Food Pantry was able to serve a total of 355 households, providing nourishment to 1463 adults, 326 seniors, and 1,324 children. Additionally, we supplied diapers to 215 infants. On-site, we served nearly 240 meals through our community meals, the Summer Youth Enrichment Program, and various ministries.

We'd like to share an email from a beneficiary of our Food Pantry: *"I have a job, own a car, and a house. But I'm poor. It is increasingly difficult to maintain with prices soaring everywhere, especially food. I do buy food, but have to make many concessions about what I'm able to purchase. The donated food and commodities have been a life saver for me for a while. It allows some relief knowing I don't have to choose between electricity or eating. I'm not terribly picky, and take what I am given, or take only what I will eat... I do not feel bad about getting Charity food, there is so much food waste- we have enough to feed every person in this country and feed them well. Yet I am grateful, and this is a big thank you. Without organizations like yours our community would be in a pretty sad state." -Johnny B.*

The demand from the community remains high. If you would like to assist with a food donation, diaper donation, food drive, diaper drive, or contribute other essential items, please reach out to us for a list of supplies that are currently needed.

## PRAISE & PRAYER REQUESTS

- Praise God for a successful Summer Youth Enrichment Program.
- Praise God for local churches, donors, and supporters who provided backpacks filled with school supplies and goodies for Bethel Youth.
- Praise God for local churches and donors who have dropped off canned goods and non-perishable items for the food pantry.
- Continue to pray for our students as they return to school. May God grant them a successful year, opportunities to meet new friends, and safety.
- Pray that God will provide diapers for families of our food pantry (size 3, 4, 5, and 6)
- Pray for the success of our new FREE Medical Clinic at the Bethel Center.