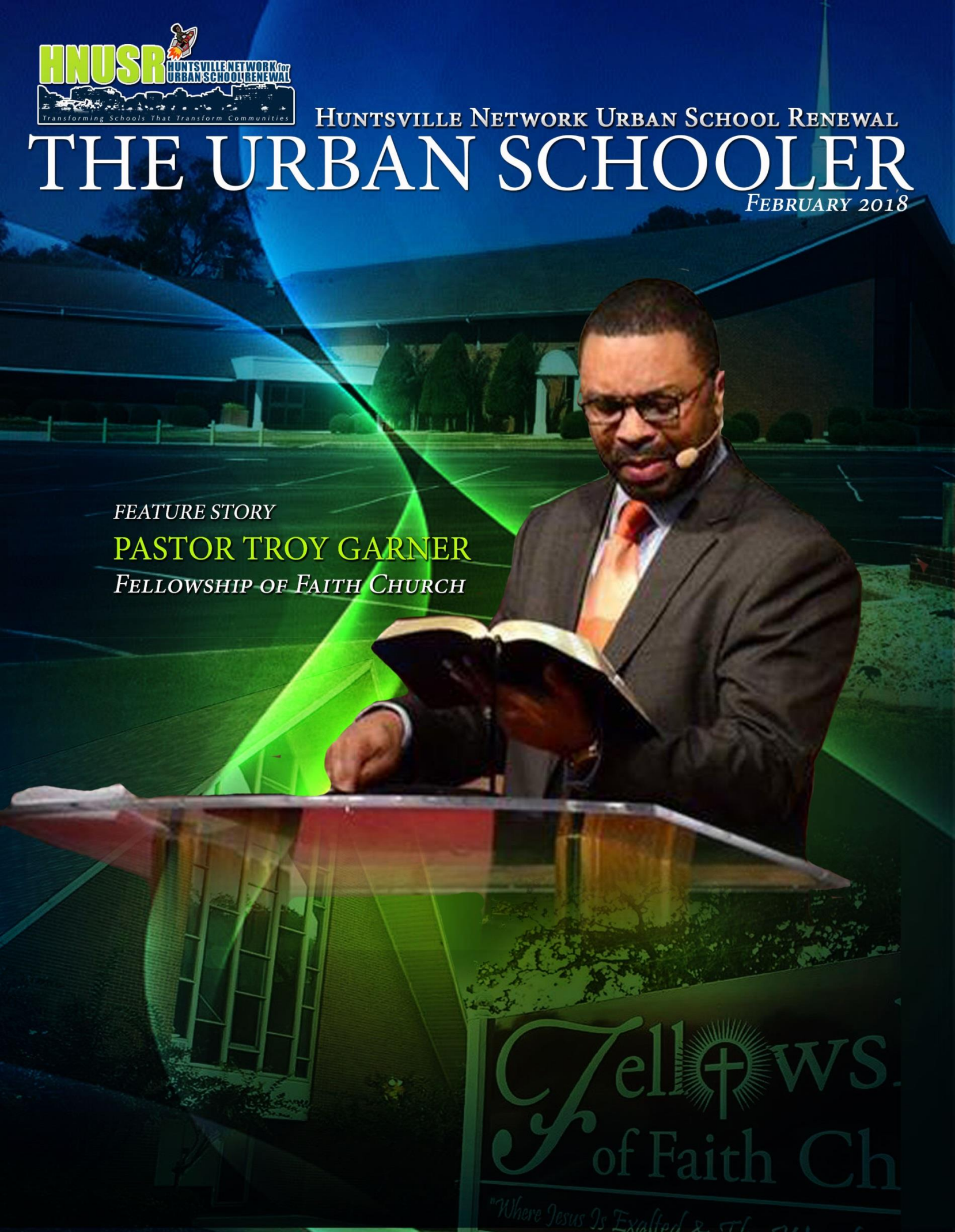
HNUSR HUNTSVILLE NETWORK for URBAN SCHOOL RENEWAL

Transforming Schools That Transform Communities

HUNTSVILLE NETWORK URBAN SCHOOL RENEWAL

THE URBAN SCHOOLER

FEBRUARY 2018



FEATURE STORY

PASTOR TROY GARNER

FELLOWSHIP OF FAITH CHURCH

CEO'S CORNER

Edward L. Jones,
Ph.D. | President/CEO

There is nothing more valuable or precious to a community than its children; yet, too many times, children are overlooked and their needs marginalized in the name of expediency and protocol.

There is an account given of Jesus in the New Testament records. His fame and abilities were so evident within his community that one day someone brought children to him wanting him to lay hands on them and pray for them. But Jesus' disciples, in an effort to maintain protocol and expedite his time commitments, tried to protect Jesus by running the children away. But Jesus, recognizing the centrality of children and their innocence to the very Kingdom of God, rebuked his very well-meaning disciples for nonchalantly overlooking the needs and desires of the children.

I'm afraid that in our own way as disciples of Christ, we are guilty of nonchalantly overlooking the needs of children, particularly poor children, as our ability to overlook them is proportional to the perceived value we as a society place on them. Children in poor communities are less valued than their peers from more affluent communities. All we need do to verify this claim is to look at what's happening within the halls of Congress. Programs and services that greatly benefit the needs of poor children are on the chopping block because these children are undoubtedly seen – perhaps nonchalantly or not – as a threat to the expediency of those who govern. There is a prevalent sentiment in Congress that the rich must get richer and anything standing in the way of that, even children, become casualties in a war on greed.

> But Jesus called the children to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me and do not hinder them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these."
> - Luke 18:16 (NIV)

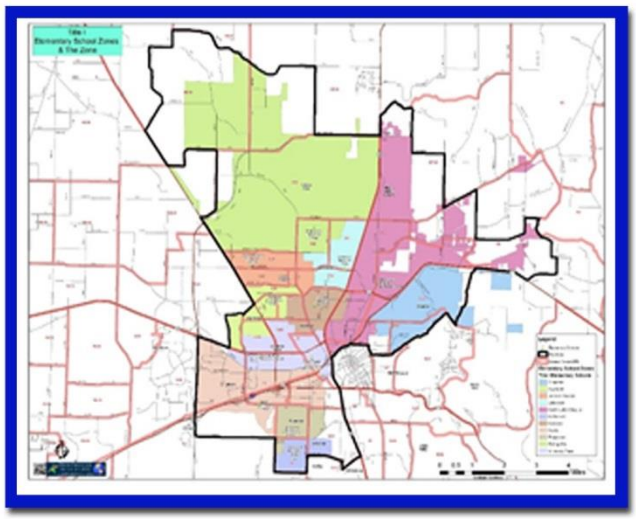
Perhaps if all of us were more childlike, we would then appreciate the true value of our children and make them a priority in all that we do. The challenge that I issue is that we seek to love children like Jesus loved them and truly live up to the words he gave when he taught his disciples how to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Through partnerships with this ministry, faith, civic and social organizations can discover ways to help set the world right when it comes to our most precious commodity – children – and do what is best below on Earth as it is above in Heaven. With your support and prayers, thousands of children in Huntsville's most impoverished communities will find not only better educational outcomes than they have traditionally, but a belief that they can make a difference in themselves, their family, community, country and world.

As we begin this new year, we begin with an appeal for you to help us make a real difference in the lives of some of God's most marginalized children. Your gifts really do a make a difference in the lives of children who suffer unconscionable educational inequities due mostly to poverty-related factors.

I look forward to seeing how God will use your generosity in these awesome days ahead!

The HNUSR Zone



The Huntsville Network for Urban School Renewal, Inc. (HNUSR) targets low-income communities in Huntsville, Alabama that it collectively refers to as the "Zone." The Zone is a 20.36 square mile geographic area on the north side of the City of Huntsville. The Zone is defined by 16 of the 2010 Census Bureau Census Tracts: 2.10, 2.02, 3.01, 3.02, 5.01k, 5.02, 5.03, 6.01, 6.02, 7.01, 7.02, 12, 13.01, 13.02, 15, and 30. These census tracts encapsulate all the Huntsville City School System's Title I schools service area and are the communities that HNUSR seeks to target due to the historically low academic achievement of children from these communities.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AND QUALITY OF SCHOOLING. There is a wide and worsening achievement gap between children attending Title I and non-Title I schools in the Huntsville City School System. Again, the Zone encapsulates communities with children zoned to the Title I schools, and a greater number of these children continue to not meet academic content standards in reading and other areas, as measured by state and national assessments of achievement. At the pivotal 3rd grade, more than twice (2.5) as many children in the non-Tile I schools show reading proficiency than children in the Title I schools, and 3rd grade boys in Title I schools perform worse than any demographic group in Title I and non-Title I schools. This is particularly concerning as research has generally correlated males who lack reading proficiency by 3rd grade with an increased chance of going to prison.

HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES. There is a distinct difference in household and family composition among families that live in the Zone and those residing in Huntsville City as a whole. In the Zone, there is an even distribution between traditional families with both a mother and father present (25%) and female householder families with no husband present (27%). However, this is significantly different from Huntsville City where 39% of all households are a traditional couple family and 14% of all households have a female head with no husband present. Also in the Zone, of the households with school-aged children, a great majority of them (60%) are headed by a female only householder with 33% of the households as traditional husband/wife households; whereas, this situation for Huntsville City is reversed: 59% of the households with school-aged children are traditional married couple families and 33% of the families with school-aged children are headed by a female with no husband present.

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS. Residents in the Zone are economically challenged compared to residents in Huntsville City. The percentage of all families in the Zone whose income in the past 12 months is below the poverty level is twice as much (24.04%) than Huntsville City (12.40%). On average, there are almost three times as many married couple families in the Zone experiencing poverty (12.64%) than in Huntsville City as a whole (4.60%). Particularly, there are more married couples with school-age children (under 18 years) in the Zone whose income falls below the poverty level (15.76%) than the comparable group in Huntsville City (6.20%).

RACE AND ETHNICITY. The racial makeup of the Zone is predominantly African American (63%) followed by White residents (22%). About 6% of the residents of all races claim ethnicity of Hispanic origin. The Zone is composed, therefore, of significantly more African American residents than Huntsville City (19%) and claims a slightly higher number of residents of any race than Huntsville City (4%) listing their ethnicity as Hispanic.

FEATURE STORY

Pastor Troy L. Garner | Fellowship of Faith Church

When well laid plans were suddenly squashed at the last minute to hold a Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools® Program on the campus of Alabama A&M University, Pastor Troy Garner and the Fellowship of Faith Church stepped up to the plate and opened their doors. Because of the generosity of Pastor Garner and his church congregation and the generosity of other supporters like the First Missionary Baptist Church, Huntsville, Toyota Motor Corporation, and the Corporation for National and Community Service, the CDF Freedom Schools® Program did not fail and was an extremely successful event.

About 50 children from all across Huntsville/Madison County participated in the CDF Freedom Schools® Program hosted by the Fellowship of Faith Church, and what a time they had! Many children who were struggling academically and not enthused at school came alive at Freedom School. Not only were children exposed to books in which the characters represented them and their experiences, they participated in a self-affirmation experience every morning. This experience, dubbed "Harambee!" by the CDF Freedom Schools® Program, is a time of informal sharing when children and staff come together to celebrate themselves and each other.

Children, particularly in the city's Title I schools, struggle academically in all subject areas, including math and science. In Freedom School, their literacy skills development was also complemented with activities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Mr. Angelo Coleman and his team from @ Risk, LLC involved the children in their STEM for Kids project where they were exposed to a challenging, hands-on, and intellectual learning environment.

When Pastor Garner accepted the invitation of the HNUSR to serve as a host site for its CDF Freedom School Program, the HNUSR had already been approved to support 50 children. Out of the more than 100 children in the Fellowship of Faith's By Faith Summer Camp program, Pastor Garner gave us access to 50 of them. These children, most of whom had their own challenges when it came to academic and social issues, where just ripe for Freedom School programming. In that one summer session, Pastor Garner saw the difference the CDF Freedom Schools® Program made in the lives of these children. "Those kids came alive during those cheers and chants! I would like to see our entire summer program as a Freedom Schools Program."

We are taking Pastor Garner up on his offer! We are currently working with the Fellowship of Faith to again become a host site for an HNUSR-sponsored Freedom School session!

All of this is possible only through the generous support of our benefactors. Yet, there is so much more to achieve. About 50 children were able to be reached with the HNUSR program at the Fellowship of Faith Church, but there are so many more children suffering academically and socially who could be help by a Freedom School summer program.

There are 5,484 Grades K – 8 children attending the Huntsville City School System's Title I schools with 561 of them located in the Fellowship of Faith Church's footprint at Lakewood Elementary and our desire is to help each and everyone of them be all they can be. Of this number, 2,250 are in kindergarten through 2nd grade; 1,783 are in 3rd through 5th grade; and 1,451 are in 6th through 8th grade. With more than half of all students in these schools on average (58%) living in poverty conditions (as measured by the number of students on free and reduced-price lunch), opportunities that their parents or guardians can afford for supplemental academic help, particularly during the summer months, are typically nonexistent.

That's why we need your help and why your past generosity has been so beneficial. But there are so many children who go without simply because we don't have the space to accommodate them. Our goal is to change this and make Freedom School assessible to all children and parents who need one.

We are thankful and grateful for the Fellowship of Faith Church and their commitment particularly to children and families in their North Huntsville community. If your congregation or community organization would like to partner with the HNUSR to host a summer Freedom School program, please contact us at **(256) 716-9168** or **email info@hnusr.org**.

Evan Dentley

"Working with HNUSR and being given the opportunity to serve the families of Huntsville is something for which I am tremendously thankful!"

VOLUNTEER STORY

The Windy City Blows into the Rocket City to Help Change Lives

Evan Dentley had never heard of Huntsville, Alabama but when recruited to join the HNUSR CDF Freedom Schools® program, he was confident he could make a positive difference here. And what a difference he made!

"That summer I saw a transformation in those children and their families! Seeing children who barely wanted to walk in the door the first week, then begging to read a book on the fifth week was amazing. Seeing youth deal with conflict resolution amongst themselves was eye-watering. It was amazing witnessing youth talk about how they can make a difference in themselves, family, community, country, and world and with hope, education and action." When asked what he considered the biggest impact he thought the HNUSR Freedom School program had on the children, Evan says, "Seeing those children band together through adversity. Kids that were once physically fighting each other, were now verbally fighting for each other with great articulation!"

EVAN KNOWS A THING OR TWO ABOUT FREEDOM SCHOOLS. "I was a scholar in the program in Chicago in 2003. I was a Level 3 scholar and the name of my tribe was Mini Fresh! After two years in the program as a scholar, I was asked to become a Junior Servant Leader and throughout my high school career I helped with the Heritage Community Development Corporation Freedom Schools. After my first year in college, I was asked to be a Servant Leader Intern (SLI), and, ironically, my Site Coordinator was one of my SLIs when I was a scholar."

Evan is an Ella Baker Trainer (EBT) for the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools® program. Ella Baker Trainers are the best of the best CDF Freedom Schools teacher-mentors and are selected to join a national training team to implement the CDF Freedom Schools model. "Being an Ella Baker trainer has opened so many doors for me. Not only did being an EBT help my career, it also gave me a family that reaches across the country, a family I am grateful to have in my life because they inspire me to be better every day."

"I believe that being a Site Coordinator for HNUSR helped shape me into the professional I am today. I was fresh out of college and was asked to lead a group of amazing teachers and aspiring educators! I learned about creating systems to better serve program participants that I still use today!"

Evan's coordination of the inaugural Freedom Schools program at the Fellowship of Faith Church was nothing short of amazing and he is certainly worthy of recognition as the volunteer story for the month. When summing up his summer experience, Evan says, "I am grateful that Dr. Jones trusted me to come into the amazing Huntsville community and serve in the capacity of Site Coordinator. Working with HNUSR and being given the opportunity to serve the families of Huntsville is something for which I am tremendously thankful!"

If you are interested in volunteering with the Huntsville Network for Urban School Renewal, Inc., please contact us at www.hnusr.org.

"Kids that were once physically fighting each other, were now verbally fighting for each other with great articulation!"

225 Spragins St. NW
Suite M
Huntsville, AL 35801
www.hnusr.org
ejones@hnusr.org
(256) 716-9168

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Thank you for your support of the Huntsville/Madison County Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) CDF Freedom Schools® Program sponsored in partnership with the Huntsville Network for Urban School Renewal, Inc. (HNUSR). Your donation supports this initiative and allows us to offer this program with no charge to the families who need it most.

_____$1,500 provides summer and after school programs for 1 child for one year
_____$ 800 provides a Freedom School program for 1 child during the summer
_____$ 500 provides meals, refreshments & instructional supplies for 1 child for summer

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