

A Day of Service to our Neighbor

by Victor Alzona

Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once said ***“all life is interrelated, that somehow we're caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.”*** These words reminded the volunteers that Wedgefield is a part of a larger community in East Orange County that includes our neighbor, Bithlo.

In the spirit of community and memory of human rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Victor Alzona, Arlinda Phills, Blanch Cyril, and Rose Lee volunteered at the United Global Outreach center on January 22. The volunteers sorted, organized, folded, and moved a truckload of donated items: clothing for men, women, children and infants, children's toys, shoes, and a crib to a storage unit to help the organization prepare for the weekly community pantry.



Blanch, Arlinda, Victor, and Rose

After volunteering at the United Global Outreach center, Timothy McKinney the Executive Vice President of UGO gave me an up-close and personal tour of Bithlo.

As a resident of Wedgefield for over 10 years, I have come to believe that I have known my community well. It was during this short tour of the North and South side of Colonial Drive between Chuluota Rd and Lancing that I realized the hard realities of life for the majority of Bithlo Residences.

The majority of Bithlo residences lives in mobile homes, trailers, or manufactured homes and takes public transportation. In 2009, Lynx bus terminated service to the area due to budget problems. Now how do you think these residences without a vehicle or public transportation will be able to find work or get to work? If you have guessed walking on a busy road called Colonial Drive for 9 miles until they can take public transportation, you have guessed correctly. By the way, you may have also noticed that Colonial Drive on our side of town does not have any sidewalks, so the people are literally risking their lives by walking alongside the 50 mile per hour traffic.

Not everyone may know the current situation in Bithlo, because most of the trailers and mobile homes are invisible behind miles of tree line from Colonial Drive, but the impoverished and depressed get food clothing, and an education at the United Global Outreach center. The UGO center has been working on helping the people in the community since 2009 by providing food, clothing, toys, and an environment of compassion and learning. On an average week, the UGO gives out over 1500 loaves of bread to the community and runs Orange County Academy, a school for 36 students that would not have been able to attend public school. The UGO also provides something that is not tangible, the sense of stewardship and encouragement for people to give back to the community.

How can you help? The United Global Outreach center is accepting donations of clothing, food, money, and equipment to help the school and feed the community. You can reach the UGO by contacting them at 407-394-6087.

