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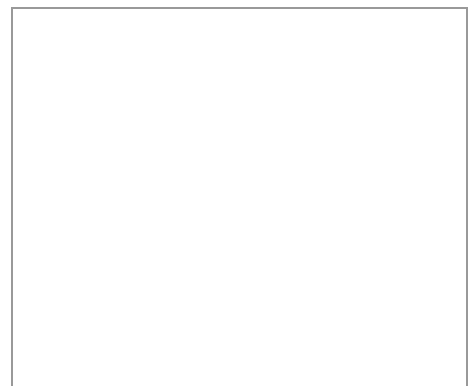
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First Baptist Church joins effort to bring change to city neighborhood

Apr. 4, 2014 | Comments

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First Baptist Church helps another pastor's vision: Gary and Josephine Montgomery find support from the city and First Baptist Church in their move to Griffin Heights home.

Written by **Byron Dobson**
Associate Editor

The mid-afternoon parade of drivers looking for available parking along the 800 block of California Street gave the first indication that something important was happening.

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For the most part, this stretch of neighborhood in Tallahassee's Griffin Heights community was quiet last Monday afternoon, except for a few young men chatting on the steps of the house next to the one where about 50 visitors were crowding the driveway, hoping to get a closer view of the people standing near the front where a small lectern and microphone had been set up.

This was an important gathering for members of Tallahassee's First

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Baptist Church and for Gary and Josephine Montgomery, who run



Volunteers from [First Baptist](#) Church work to restore a longtime vacant house from the ground up on California Street, north of Tennessee Street, where Gary and Josephine Montgomery will live. The Montgomerys, who direct a family ministry, hope their move brings a positive influence on children in the area. / First Baptist Church/Special to the Democrat



Pastor Gary Montgomery stands in front of offices for Living Stones International, 604 Eugenia St., where he and his wife, Josephine, counsel children of parents who are incarcerated. / Byron Dobson/Tallahassee Democrat

More information

Living Stones is a 501 (c)(3) and is listed with the Guide Star, the Community Foundation of North Florida and the Florida Department of Agriculture. Its operation budget is derived from sponsorships and donations. To learn more, visit www.welivingstones.org. A major need now is a van to transport children for visits with their incarcerated parents. Volunteers and interns also are welcomed. Call (850) 765-0320.

their Living Stones International ministry across town at 604 Eugenia St., just north of Florida A&M University.

But the gathering represented more than the celebratory atmosphere that attracted top officials from the city and First Baptist Church. It represented the conclusion of several months of volunteer hours on behalf of church members to help renovate an abandoned house in Griffin Heights where the Montgomerys now will call home. By moving here, the couple hopes to make a difference by living in a neighborhood where many of its residents face the challenges that the couple tries to address by working with children of incarcerated parents and to provide family counseling.

Here, they will join the efforts of others who are determined to restore the sense of neighborhood pride that once was evident before the epidemic of crack cocaine and other crimes began to gain a foothold on the community.

The fact the Montgomerys are moving to the neighborhood is welcomed news to Rev. Rudy Ferguson, pastor of nearby New Birth Tabernacle of Praise. Ferguson and Montgomery have worked together with Griffin Heights residents in several anti-crime and pro-family efforts.

“I grew up in the community where he is living and think it will be a plus for Pastor Montgomery to be there,” Ferguson said.

“His presence will enhance the community. Many pastors have moved out of that community.”

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Pastor Gary Montgomery and his wife, Josephine, who run Living Stones International, a ministry for children and family outreach, are surrounded by members of First Baptist Church at the Montgomery's new home on [California Street](#). / Byron Dobson/Tallahassee Democrat

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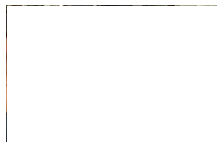
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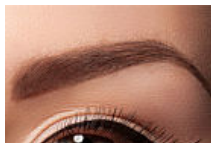
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