

Waco Community Development

"Helping to inspire and cultivate healthy neighborhoods."

October 2012



It's a Beautiful Day in This Neighborhood: An Interview with the Porters

By: Gabriela Gatlin

Michelle and Matt Porter bought a Waco Community Development home a couple years ago. I visited with Michelle recently to ask how their family has experienced living in Near North Waco. Here are the stories Michelle shared with me.

Describe some of the ways that you've connected with your neighbors since moving into the Near North Waco neighborhood.

We see our neighbors almost on a daily basis to share life and share resources such as lawn mowers and washing machines. We share meals on a weekly basis with our neighbors and love getting to know them more. I love that when I drive to work in the mornings, the crossing guard in front of our house waves and recognizes me.

What about the Near North Waco has surprised you?

It has surprised me how much Cameron Park gets utilized, and the diversity of people from all over Waco who visit it is great. We were surprised that the Cameron Park Zoo really did live up to the hype. People told us it was such a great zoo, and they were correct. We've been surprised at how quickly we fit into the neighborhood and how it feels good to come home after a trip somewhere else.

Why did you choose to live in the Near North Waco neighborhood? What makes this a good place to live?

We chose to live here because of our church community. We live within a few blocks of many of our church friends, and we love that. The Near North Waco neighborhood is a great place to live because of the diversity of people, the educational options and opportunities, the activities available (Mayborn Museum, zoo, sporting events), and the people we interact with on a daily basis.

Have you worked with your neighbors to solve a problem? If so, what was the problem and how did you work together?

Yes, we have worked with our neighbors to deal with how to handle having resources such as washing machines and lawn mowers. When our neighbor's washing machine broke, we all decided it made sense to share one.

What are your hopes for your neighborhood over the next 10 years?

We hope that our neighborhood will continue to be a place where we feel comfortable raising our children and that continues to feel like a small town. We would love to see a bilingual program for our children and the children of the neighborhood.

CALENDAR

Classes

2012 Financial Literacy
6-8 PM for 6 weeks
Next class series begins October 25th

Homebuyer Education II
Next class will begin November 10th
1-6 PM

Classes are free!
To register call:
(254) 235-7358



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Using our Gifts to Serve

By: Mike Stone



“I love my neighborhood. It ain’t perfect but there are a lot of very talented young people. I want to help them channel that creativity and keep them from taking the wrong path,” JD proudly said at one of the East Waco Community Planning Meetings.

JD was expressing that we don’t have to solve problems by doing things we don’t know how to do. Instead, we solve problems by using the gifts and talents that we are given. For example, JD wanted to host a Christian RAP concert in his neighborhood. He wanted to do it to help the young people that live all around him, but he knew that you need food to attract youth to an event. The food would cost several hundred dollars, which he didn’t have. He thought maybe he could do a lemonade stand fundraiser to raise the funds to provide food at the rap concert. So that is exactly what he did. He recruited several of the young rappers to help run a lemonade stand and made enough money to pay for the food for the rap concert. Then he was able to host the event and reach out to the youth of his neighborhood. This determination and “can do” spirit really excites me as we work with the East Waco Community.

Not Your Average Parent-Teacher Conference

By: Alexis Christensen

Cool weather isn’t the only thing October has brought to Waco. Parent teacher one-on-one meetings, formally parent-teacher conferences, are up and running at West Avenue Elementary School. Many parents expressed that “parent-teacher conferences” make them think that both they and their child are in trouble. West Avenue decided to change the name to “parent teacher one-on-ones” because it emphasizes that parents are a part of the solution rather than the problem.



Over 100 meetings are being scheduled with the help of school staff, teachers, and parents. Shawnta Callam has two children at West Avenue and has every date and time she is meeting a teacher memorized. “I got it all down, I’m ready” she says. These intentional conversations provide a place for parents and teachers to work together for the success of the child.

Though many parents and guardians work full time or nontraditional hours, they are determined to participate in these conversations. Gloria Rodriguez, a grandparent, said, “If Victor’s dad can’t come, his grandfather will be there. Someone will be there.” It is such a privilege to be a part of this process. The one-on-one meetings provide an opportunity for parents to be on campus and to have a positive experience at the school. These positive experiences increase the likelihood for parental involvement on campus, which leads to vibrant, excellent schools.

Welcome Jose!

By: Jose Vallejo



My name is Jose Vallejo. I feel so blessed to have the opportunity to do my internship at Waco Community Development! I was born in Waco and really want to give back to my community. I am currently a student at Tarleton State University

studying Social Work. Being able to hear the community's heart and desire for their city, and the chance to be part of the transformation together with them is an honor. It is so exciting to learn social work in a community context, and to see what God has for me and this city. I also enjoy traveling overseas with friends, doing mission work with my church, and reading the Bible in the mornings.

Under Construction

907 N. 12th Street



Three large Bedrooms
Two Full Baths
Living Room - Dining Room
Kitchen with Breakfast Bar
Built-In Range & Microwave
Dish washer and Disposal
Separate Utility Room
High Efficiency Central HVAC (Heat Pump)
Master Bath with Dual Vanity (His/hers)
Security System
Double Pane Energy Efficient Windows

Go through life without quitting

By: Darrell Abercrombie



Perseverance - the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition.

The United States Women's Softball team won the gold medal in Atlanta's 1996 Olympic Games. They lost only one game but that loss came with a remarkable story about perseverance. In the fifth inning against Australia, Danielle Tyler hit a home run over the center-field fence. The American third baseman ran around the bases with a rush of adrenaline. When she was greeted by a swarm of well-wishing teammates at home plate, she let the excitement distract her focus and she did not touch the base. When all of the yelling subsided, the Australian team quietly appealed to the umpire who dramatically called Tyler out.

John, one of our clients at Waco Community Development, bought his home seven years ago. Things were going well until John's health began to fail. He was a long distance truck driver, when he was diagnosed with a medical condition. He had to change from being a cross country driver to an in-state driver, which affected his income. He got behind on his mortgage and he needed help from losing his home that he had worked so hard for.

We talked to his mortgage company and got all the necessary documents that they needed for us to speak on his behalf. We worked out a deal for him to get his mortgage modified, but more importantly, for him to keep his home. John feels that he has learned some valuable lessons about his health and his home. No matter how bad things look, if you can continue to work on your situation in spite of how things appear, you can do anything you put your heart into.

The United States Women's Softball team may have lost the game, but they won the Gold Medal. John may have gotten behind on his payments, but he sought counseling and worked to keep his house. You can't go through life quitting everything. If you're going to achieve anything, you've got to stick with something. Never think that God's delays are God's denials. Hold on; hold fast; hold out. Patience is genius.



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Watching Kids and Veggies Grow at J.H. Hines

By: Ryn Farmer



The school year is definitely in full swing! For the second year in a row, students at J.H. Hines have the unique opportunity to learn about gardening, agriculture, and nutrition through the World Hunger Relief Farm every Tuesday afternoon. Recently, I was helping Dontrell, a kindergarten student at J.H. Hines, plant peas in the garden, and he looked up at me and said, “First you put the seed in, then the sun shines down on it, then you put some water on it and watch it grow!” The knowledge he is gaining from this experience and his enthusiasm for planting is contagious. The students in Garden Club are able to take home the fresh vegetables they grow, and this year they will take home flowers as well. They also have the opportunity to make healthy meals at Garden Club. During one class, the children made homemade salsa. I’ve often seen children refuse to eat the vegetables in front of them, but these children couldn’t get enough of the salsa they made using fresh tomatoes, green peppers, onion, cilantro and jalapenos! They are learning invaluable lessons about growing food in their urban “backyard” as well as the importance of healthy eating. I look forward to working alongside this wonderful partnership between J.H. Hines and the World Hunger Relief Farm and to eating more fresh veggies this year!

BY THE NUMBERS

Housing:

Homeowners: 187
New Homes: 46
Renovated: 16

Opportunities:

Counseled: 1,678
Active: 93

Maintenance:

Volunteers: 6,124
Vol. Hours: 44,465
Lots Mowed: 2,381