

# Waco Community Development

*"Helping to inspire and cultivate healthy neighborhoods."*

February 2014



## Open Doors, Open Hearts: Partnership at West Ave.

By: Alexis Christensen

West Avenue Elementary is a hub of activity these days. Parents, families, community members and mentors all mingle throughout the hallways. Under the leadership of Principal Joseph Alexander, West Avenue's "open door" policy is not just a maxim but a way of life. "My philosophy for building family engagement and community engagement is to understand our Title I responsibilities while building the capacity of parents and school staff for strong parental involvement, which I believe will in turn improve academic achievement," said Mr. Alexander.

With this mindset pervading campus, community members are proud to be involved at West. Gayle Lintz, long time mentor at West Avenue and member of Calvary Baptist Church is one of them. "I cannot do all the ministry opportunities available through my church but I can do this. I can mentor. I have a background in education and have a flexible schedule, so I decided this is something I could do," said Ms. Lintz. Calvary Baptist Church has a long standing relationship with West Avenue and has been committed to being involved in the school for several years.

Partnerships like these help West Avenue thrive not only academically but socially as well. "We hope we are not just helping academically, though that is important, we hope that we can be somebody in their life, a positive somebody for the students," explained Ms. Lintz.

Parents agree that partnership in the school is important. Linda Keeton Perales, West Avenue parent, says her favorite thing about West Avenue is the care and concern of the staff, teachers, and community. "Everyone seems to have genuine concern for my student. I believe any parent would want that kind of care. It's like my child has at-school parents," said Keeton Perales. Ms. Keeton Perales also serves as Secretary for the West Avenue Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and sees that as a part of her contribution to the school.

In the coming days, months, and years, West Avenue Elementary has a bright future in partnering with its neighbors. As Mr. Alexander shared, "It takes a village to raise a child and we must build communities that will support local public education." We at Waco Community Development are excited to help build communities that do that very thing.

### CALENDAR

#### Classes

**2014 Financial Literacy**  
6-8 PM for 6 weeks  
Next class series begins March 6th

**Homebuyer Education II**  
Next class will begin April 5th  
1-6 PM

#### Board of Directors:

**President:**  
Billy Davis Jr.  
**Vice President / Secretary:**  
Dr. Gaynor Yancey

Dr. Van Allen  
Josh Caballero  
Ken Cooper  
Carol Dugat  
Tim Holtkamp  
Walt Keeler  
Johnny Mankin  
Rev. Frank Montgomery  
Jon Spelman

### ***Partnership Highlight:***

*Recently, our community organizers had the privilege of partnering with Waco Independent School District to facilitate a meeting with their Board of Trustees, Waco ISD administration, staff, parents and community members. The purpose of the meeting was to generate conversation surrounding their 5 Year Strategic Plan and to gain feedback about how Waco ISD can effectively partner with parents and community members to positively impact our children. Many of the people who attended said they appreciated having input from a diverse group of people and for the opportunity to openly discuss these important issues. We will be compiling the information gathered at the meeting for the District to sift through and use to help make changes to their 5 Year Strategic Plan.*



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Issue 49 - 2014

The newsletter of Waco  
Community Development whose  
mission is to help inspire and  
cultivate healthy neighborhoods  
throughout Waco.

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## Starting With a Great Foundation

"I want to know what my pastor thinks about the house," said Sarah, as I arrived to show her the houses we have built on North 12th Street.

Sarah came to us about buying a home several months ago. She has been diligently working with Darrell, one of our housing counselors, to become a successful homeowner. Instead of allowing minor credit issues to discourage her progress, Sarah decided to take our financial literacy and home ownership classes to help her reach her goals.

But let's back up a few months. The land that Sarah and I were standing on was once a vacant lot. I had personally mowed it numerous times and our volunteers had mowed it hundreds of times. When we were ready to build the house, we removed some of the old dirt and replaced it with some

engineered dirt to lay the basis of a foundation. It's important to start a house with a great foundation.



Sarah was doing the same thing; she was getting rid of old credit issues and laying a new foundation. Even in her personal life, she was laying a great foundation by inviting her pastor to help her pick the best house for her family. I was honored to witness this new beginning.

I look forward to celebrating with Sarah and her family at their house dedication and seeing what kind of foundation the family lays in the neighborhood.

**THANK YOU** to Waco Foundation for issuing a fundraising challenge to help us further our community organizing efforts.

And thank you to all of our donors who helped us reach the fundraising challenge. We could not do this work of inspiring and cultivating healthy neighborhoods without your support.

**THANK YOU** to Cooper Foundation for funding our technology grant for \$20,000.

*This grant allows us to update many of our technological systems like our telephone equipment, computers, server and many other items.*

**Thank you Cooper Foundation for all you do for nonprofits in Waco!**

## Save the Date

9th Annual Golf Scramble  
Will be held at Cottonwood Creek on April 24, 2014

*Hole Sponsorship \$100  
Corporate Sponsorship \$500*

Come enjoy a day of golf and learn what Waco CD has been doing this past

# Recapturing Power

By: Ryn Farmer

Our Waco neighborhoods are teeming with people who are passionate, willing and ready to become engaged in what is happening in the community. These engaged citizens have the potential to lead positive change in their own neighborhoods.



*First graduating class of GLT (L-R):  
Vickie Calhoun, Tommy Nays, Jeanette Bell*

When people are forced into leadership positions before they are prepared, however, frustrations often result. For example, they may not be effective in raising up other leaders due to lack of confidence in their own abilities. Like most of us, these potential leaders can become more effective with some training in leadership skills.

Up until now, it has most often been the case that the people who get chosen to go through leadership development sessions are not necessarily individuals from the neighborhoods where we work, but people who are already in some position of power or connected to a business, institution, or organization. Waco Community Development has always focused on identifying leaders from within the neighborhoods where we work to help them cultivate their skills and abilities. We thought giving this process a name and creating groups of cohorts might further establish and sustain this important work. Thus, Grassroots Leadership Training (or the catchy, “GLT”) was born.

We officially started our GLT program in October, and we are happy to announce the first three graduates! Three community members in East Waco have completed the three-session GLT training program. One participant said, “Although I have had some leadership training, I acquired more skills by attending the Grassroots Leadership Training. We had in-depth conversations that helped me to know more about the people in my community, their concerns and what we can do together within our own neighborhoods.”

The individuals who participate in GLT receive information that they will be able to use in their communities as they seek to work together. These skills will help them transfer power from “the top” - the traditional leadership structure - and share it with their neighbors so that the people in the community can have an effective voice in what happens within their own neighborhoods and schools. The first cohort of graduates will specifically use the tools and resources from GLT as they work to receive community input and develop a plan of action for the Northeast Riverside neighborhood.

It is vitally important to provide a safe place for potential leaders who live, work and worship in the community to develop their skills and abilities. When they are ready, they are the ones who need to be in the spotlight. When individuals who live in communities that have been oppressed and marginalized start taking action to bring change, hope is restored. They recapture the power that has always been theirs and help create an environment that allows others to do the same.

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”*



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### Issue 49 - 2014

*Waco Community Development helps to inspire and cultivate healthy neighborhoods.*

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## A Local Veteran Finds a Place to Call Home

By: Darrell Abercrombie

Calvin had been living apartments for over 20 years. He was a Vietnam Veteran who had served his country and was living with a disability. Calvin was not totally satisfied with his apartment because he did not have any space for his pet dog. He was forced to move from one apartment complex to another due to physical and structural problems the complex was experiencing.

After moving to yet another complex, Calvin heard about Waco Community Development. He came to Financial Literacy and Homebuyer Education classes and learned about the opportunity to own

a home. He was able to go from the rental assistance program to home ownership assistance with Waco Housing Authority. Because he had completed the Financial Literacy & Homebuyer Education classes, he was able to get the down payment & closing cost assistance from the City of Waco.

Now Calvin has a three bedroom house with a spacious yard for his dog to run around. He has room for a washer & dryer and no longer has to compete with others at the laundry mat. He feels right at home in his new house.

### BY THE NUMBERS

#### Housing:

Homeowners: 219  
New Homes: 50  
Renovated: 16

#### Opportunities:

Counseled: 1616  
Active: 93

#### Maintenance:

Volunteers: 6,760  
Vol. Hours: 61,740  
Lots Mowed: 2,860