

Waco Community Development

"Helping to inspire and cultivate healthy neighborhoods."

May 2014



Living Hope

By: Alexis Christensen

What happens when we become disillusioned with the work at hand? With the community we've cried for, lived in, believed in? How do we do keep the picture of the beloved community from being stripped from our minds and hearts? What happens when hope seems like a far off dream?

As a community organizer, I stare straight into the eyes of these types of questions each day. Whether in the eyes of the people I work with or in the mirror reflecting my own hopelessness. I have seen tears, desperation, confusion, anger and angst in many people. Systems can feel too big, too difficult to maneuver and change, so how do we keep going? How do we live in a world with such great challenges?

For me, it is *hope*.

The Merriam-Webster definition of hope is "to expect with confidence." I heard a sermon once where the pastor described hope as the confident expectation of good. I like that. When we face the difficulties of life and work in community, we cling to hope.

But the hope I'm talking about is more. This hope is a verb—it's action. It's seeing the endless challenges in life and saying yes again to the fight against injustice. It's about my friends in the neighborhood who are often discounted, underutilized, and disrespected but still advocating for change together. It's about showing up, speaking out, and holding fast. Hope is an element of good community organizing. In the process of listening, identifying leaders and topics of concerns, and gathering people together based on their self-interest, a thread of hope must be present if the effort is to be carried out effectively.

Hope motivates, inspires, and creates an environment of empowerment. I have seen parents lead initiatives in their schools, support their children and speak to power because of hope. I have seen churches and church members realize their capacity to impact their communities through their gifts and talents. I have seen neighborhood residents gather to create imaginative plans for change. The list is endless but the thread is the same, hope.

Hope follows me wherever I go when I remember that it is alive. At my office, in my car, on the streets, in the schools, it lingers. Author Barbara Kingsolver sums up this hope in her book *Animal Dreams*: "Here's what I've decided: the very least you can do in your life is figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof."

So, Waco, let's settle down and live under hope's roof. And while we're there, let's turn that hope into action for transformation in our communities.

Thank you for your Support!

We want to thank our corporate sponsors, hole sponsors, donors, volunteers and players for making our 9th annual Golf Tournament a huge success.



"Helping to inspire and cultivate healthy neighborhoods."

254-235-7358

CALENDAR

Classes

2014 Financial Literacy
6-8 PM for 6 weeks
Next class series
begins June 19th

Homebuyer
Education II
Next class will begin
June 21st
1-6 PM

Board of Directors:

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

Hard Hat Tours

1st Thursday of Month
At 1pm
1624 Colcord
*Come learn about
Waco Community
Development*

www.WacoCDC.org



Waco Community Development

Issue 50 - 2014

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

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How Can YOU Help Inspire and Cultivate Healthy Neighborhoods?

People often ask us how they can help inspire and cultivate healthy neighborhoods. Here are a few ways you can get involved in our work in the East & North Waco neighborhoods.

1. **Adopt a vacant lot** – mow one of our 60 vacant lots during the year. From our perspective this is “priceless.”
2. **Sponsor a “Welcome to the Neighborhood Party”** --\$75 helps us strengthen the fabric of the community.
3. **Purchase a Lawnmower** – our mowers wear out quickly. \$200 helps us to keep our lots mowed and clean.
4. **Housing Counseling** – \$265 will pay for one family to go through our counseling program.
5. **Refrigerator** – \$400 provides a great blessing to a new homeowner.
6. **Land** – \$1,500 will buy an empty lot to build a house. Assist us in making the houses we build even more affordable.
7. **IDA Matching Funds** – \$2,000 provides matching funds for a family, encourages them to develop good savings skills and attend financial literacy classes.
8. **Volunteer to teach a Financial Literacy Class** – Skilled volunteers donate their time to teach our classes.
9. Elementary Schools’ **Book Clubs books** --Donate \$30.00 to purchase two sets of 4 books for Book Club for mentors and students to use.
10. **Grassroots Leadership Training Program**--\$50.00 towards GLT allows us to purchase supplies and materials to carry out one GLT session.

We encourage you to help us in our efforts to partner with the community to help transform our neighborhoods by the donating your time and/or your financial resources. We thank you for your continued investment in Waco Community Development and our work.

If you’re interested in participating in any of these 10 areas or others, please contact Mike Stone at mike@wacocdc.org.



Soobin Kim

Volunteer Spotlight

Welcome Soobin Kim, our newest student volunteer! Soobin grew up in Seoul, South Korea and is currently a one-year exchange student at Baylor University.

Why did you want to volunteer and what have you learned?

“Although my major is social welfare, I have been thinking I haven’t experienced ‘social welfare’ outside of textbooks. It is a perfect chance for me to volunteer during my exchange student year. I have been learning that a lot of organizations, including churches, schools and nonprofit organizations are working hard to make a real change in Waco. I could not be more proud of studying social welfare and I hope what I am studying can make change where I live too.”

How One Church is Making a Difference in Waco ISD

By: Ryn Farmer & Minister Sandra Henry

Ryn: Each year, J.H. Hines Elementary has many, many wonderful volunteers who come and serve at the school in a variety of capacities. This year is no different! Pleasant Olive Missionary Baptist Church started partnering with J.H. Hines to do Book Clubs and the program is up and running!

Minister Henry: Pleasant Olive Missionary Baptist recently launched a new ministry in the church called 'Pleasant Olive Mission Ministry'. The main goal of this ministry is to serve others with love and compassion as Jesus teaches us to do. We chose to mentor youth and children as our first project. Why? Because they are our future and they are precious. God has given us children to nurture, love and guide as they grow. He said, 'Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, come unto Me.' (Matthew 19:14)

Ryn: Each week, a mentor meets with several children who are in 3rd-5th grade during their lunch hour. They develop a relationship with the children and invest in their lives to show the children they have value and worth. They also read a book with them to help increase their reading levels. The children are placed in groups with 1-2 other children who are at similar reading levels. Book Club is so popular at J.H. Hines that children run up to us and beg us to let them be in it. One of the children who is being mentored said she enjoys, "Talking about the main, big ideas from the book." One of the little girls in Minister Henry's group said, "My favorite part is reading the books and talking with my mentor."

Minister Henry: When Ryn Farmer and Waco Community Development expressed to us that our community wanted the church to reach out to young people and help them read, we shouted, 'Hallelujah!!!' We began to pray and work to establish this blessing in our church. If people can read, they can conquer the world through Christ.

Ryn: We know that other churches are interested in starting more Book Clubs at J.H. Hines, especially because we haven't even started reaching the Pre-K-2nd grade students yet. We are hopeful that it continues to grow as others see what an impact it is making. It is absolutely amazing to see what a difference 30 minutes a week is making in the lives of these incredible children. Brenda Sanders, one of the mentors, said her favorite part about being involved is "Seeing the smiles on the children's faces and the twinkle in their eyes."

Minister Henry: My favorite part of the program is interacting with the children and watching as they eagerly grasp for the knowledge needed to change their lives in a positive way. They are so eager to learn and are an inspiration to us all! We can do better with the love of God in our hearts! Thank you for giving us this opportunity to be with the children each week.

Ryn: Thank you! We could not do this work without you and everyone else dedicated to being united together as we work with the schools.

Another Great Volunteer

Tim Herron grew up in College Station before moving to Waco. He has taught three and four year olds for the past 10 years and is currently pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education and Accounting. "I really enjoy giving back to the community, whether that be volunteering or just helping people in need when I see them. I got to know Waco Community Development through Ryn and Alexis at the Farmer's Market. I loved what I learned about the program. I am currently volunteering in the office, helping with various projects." One of the projects includes compiling and updating a list of all the social service agencies in Waco. Let us know if you want a copy!



Tim Herron



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Waco, TX 76707

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Issue 50 - 2014

Waco Community Development helps to inspire and cultivate healthy neighborhoods.

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10 Years and Still Going Strong

By: Mike Stone

“Howdy ML, What are you doing these days?” asked Jon Spelman, one of our dedicated board members, when he ran into ML Dickey and his wife Sibyl while they were having breakfast at a local coffee shop.

“Not a whole lot. I shut down my business and have just started working at my church, taking care of the building and landscaping,” replied ML.

Jon continued, “I’m on the board at Waco Community Development. We could use someone like yourself to help us build homes in North Waco. Why don’t you come over to the office and visit with our Director to see if you would be interested in helping?”

Thus began a 10 year adventure for ML. Initially ML thought he was going to drift off into the sunset of retirement. Instead he used the gifts and experience that he acquired during his four decades of construction to serve. ML and Sibyl have faithfully served our community by overseeing the construction of 49 of our 52 homes and 14 of our 16 remodeled homes. There is no one more committed to their work or service than these two.



BY THE NUMBERS

Housing:

Homeowners: 226
New Homes: 50
Renovated: 17

Education:

Counseled: 1661
Active: 105

Maintenance:

Volunteers: 6,833
Vol. Hours: 62,120
Lots Mowed: 3,023