

Friends & Neighbors

The Neighborhood House Newsletter



The Growing Youth Programs at Neighborhood House

On a crisp, sunny day in late September, Brian Lira found himself in a setting he could hardly have imagined a few short years ago when he was a member of a St. Paul gang.

Brian was in a lounge at the Wellstone Center, sitting across from Minnesota Gov. Mark Dayton, who had just spent a busy morning learning about the work of Neighborhood House, meeting with staff and board members, visiting classes and touring the facility. Now it was time for the governor to hear from Brian.

Dayton listened as Brian recounted how he left gang life through the help of Neighborhood House's GRIP (Gang Reduction and Intervention Program), and how he recently earned an associate's degree in auto body from Saint Paul College. Brian talked about the opportunities that Neighborhood House's youth programs had given him – one being, of course, the opportunity at this very moment to have a personal conversation with the state's chief executive.

Amy Runk, program manager for youth programs at Neighborhood House, knows an important part of Dayton's visit was learning about Neighborhood House's programs. She also knows it was just as important -- maybe even more so -- for him to hear directly from people such as Brian, who have benefited from those programs.

"Everything we do starts with the people, not the programs," Runk says. "This is all about them. They are why we do what we do."

And she knows there are a lot more Brians out there.

"Right now, today, young people in our community face a lot of challenges," Runk says. "We see it here, and it's in the news. There is a lot going on out there. There is violence, there are people struggling. That's why we're here – for those people."

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From The President's Desk



Fall is a busy time at Neighborhood House. In this newsletter you will read about our many different youth programs that are all designed to help kids develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to create bright futures for themselves, their families and our community. Our youth programs are dynamic, evolving over time to ensure that youth have relationships with caring adults and exciting, engaging activities that allow them to grow and help others grow into young adults who have graduated from high school, have jobs or are enrolled in additional schooling (or both!), and are contributing positively to community life.

In the past year we successfully opened our Teen Resource Center which quickly became a vibrant hub that helps youth gain homework help, computer literacy, healthy relationship-building skills, financial literacy, and access to college. More recently we have significantly expanded our work with youth involved in the criminal justice system, helping them and their families chart a different pathway to a more positive future. In addition, we are extremely excited that we are now able to provide a dinner meal for all youth involved in our evening programming. We know that like most of us – it's hard for youth to stay focused on work or play on an empty stomach.

We are deeply grateful for the volunteer and financial support you provide to make all of our work – with youth, children and adults – possible. While we receive financial support from both the government and private foundations, donations of funds and volunteer hours are critical to our ability to partner with our participants on their journey to a stable, rewarding life.

Thank you for being part of Neighborhood House.

Nancy @ Brady

Neighborhood House offers a wide variety of programs for young people in addition to GRIP. Kids Connect provides daily enrichment with tutoring services for kids in grades K-5. Youth aged 12-16 have the Teen Outreach Program to help them increase healthy behaviors. Comcast Digital Connectors aids students ages 14-21 with computer skills. The Health & Wellness program for youth in grades 6-12 combines sporting activities and discussion groups to help youth learn how to regulate emotions and promote positive social interactions. And the drop-in Teen Resource Center provides help and support for anything that might be happening in a young person's life.



While each program is unique, “the goals are universal,” Runk says. “We’re trying to create opportunities for youth to grow, to help them develop social and emotional skills, to work with them on how to interact with other people and to handle conflict in a constructive way, and how to build relationships.”

There are several keys to meeting those goals, according to Runk.

One is commitment, because change doesn't always happen overnight. “We make a commitment to our youth, but they also make a commitment to the programs in which they are involved, often for a year or longer,” she says. “This is a long-term investment, from both sides. We ask them to show up every day, and we give them the space to make mistakes, but we also hold them accountable.”

“We make a commitment to our youth, but they also make a commitment to the programs in which they are involved...”



Brian, for example, was part of GRIP for more than five years, and in fact continues to be involved. He often stops by the evening meeting of Jovenes Con Palabra (Young Men of their Word), a GRIP program in which he participated, to offer the same kind of help and encouragement he got when he was a member.

Another key, Runk says, is allowing participants to have a voice in determining their own programming. "This isn't just Neighborhood House saying 'this is how it works.' Feedback from our participants is so critical to make sure that we're giving young people what they're looking for and what they need. Our kids definitely have a large say in what we do."

In addition, according to Runk, it's important to recognize that the barriers young people face are multi-faceted, and that the Neighborhood House youth programs can't specifically address them all. "The families of many of our participants have housing issues, or problems with other basic needs," she says. "We do work with them on not internalizing those problems, or getting angry about them. But it also gives us an opportunity to connect them with other Neighborhood House resources that can help them and their families."

Finally, Runk says, because "it's hard to know if a program is effective if the people in it haven't eaten," a new program at Neighborhood House provides a meal for participants in all youth evening programs.

Regardless of the goals of the youth programs, or the ways those goals are achieved, everything is done toward one big picture, Runk says. For Brian, and hundreds just like him, "our programs, simply, help them become more strongly connected to their community, in a positive way. It's not really any more complicated than that."



Employee Spotlight - Shanna (Shay) Woods

Shanna "Shay" Woods is on a mission to give youth in our community the skills and confidence to achieve their limitless potential. Energetic and persuasive, Shay fills the Teen Resource Center at Neighborhood House with her boundless energy. Bouncing from conversation to conversation, engaging with youth who are entering the room after a long day at school, Shay relentlessly tracks down details about their days and looks for opportunities to make a connection.

Through constant reflection Shay has developed a unique youth-engagement philosophy, and works tirelessly to provide a lens through which teens can develop healthy self-image: "I want youth to understand their ability for self-advocacy. Many of our teens have grown up in circumstances where their ethnicity or socio-economic background is seen as limiting, and I want them to challenge negative cultural impressions and build leadership that highlights their personalities and individual skills."

Not yet in her mid-20s, Shay's involvement with Neighborhood House dates back five years ago to when she first enrolled in the Americorps program out of high school, and began working with youth on the West Side. Today, Shay coordinates our Teen Resource Center and the Comcast Digital Connectors program, an initiative teaching leadership and digital literacy skills to teens. Both programs are still growing, but she has big dreams for the youth "I want our teens to be successful, and I want them to pursue that success on their own terms."



Dream Big Annual College Fair



Above: Jason Sole with Mike Herdon, from the Neighborhood House College Access Team.

Jason Sole is the author of *From Prison to Ph.D* - an autobiography about his journey to build a better life. "I'm grateful that I could share my story to help encourage others to strive for excellence through education."



Dream Big, the annual college fair hosted by Neighborhood House's College Access program, was held earlier this month at the Wellstone Center. Featuring tabling by college representatives and a Q&A with current college students and recent graduates, Dream Big engaged more than 100 youth and adults, helping aspiring students explore how college can open doors to a brighter future.

Jason Sole, an assistant professor at Metropolitan University, took the stage as Dream Big's keynote speaker. Immersing a packed auditorium in the story of his transformation from gang member to college graduate, educator, husband, and father - Jason mixed humor with tough glimpses into a life of petty crime before ending with a challenge to every member of the audience: "How many of you feel that you have more to give? Don't sell yourselves short. Don't sell out to the streets."

Left: Tezazu Asmelash is a graduate of our Digital Connectors Program where he developed strong leadership skills and became Cisco Certified. He was captain of his Humboldt High School soccer team and worked with our College Access Team while preparing for and applying to college. This past May he was awarded the Constance Currie Scholarship. Tezazu is a student at the U of M where he is studying engineering.

Volunteer Highlight - Sue Elias Stutrud

For most of her life, Sue Elias Stutrud has been seeking ways to help others. As a child growing up outside of Chicago, she and her friends would regularly bypass the carefree adventures of summertime in favor of cleaning neighbor's houses for nothing but popsicles.

Sue continues to explore her passion for service by volunteering with Neighborhood House's Skills for School preschool program, helping children from non-English speaking homes learn the language and classroom skills they need for success in Kindergarten. Early on, Sue discovered that she gravitated towards helping children who were shy or had special needs:



"When I'm in the classroom, I love finding that one kid. The child who may be struggling with low self-esteem, or having a difficult day, and helping them to discover something new and extraordinary. I really enjoy building tall Lego towers with a child, lifting them up to add blocks, and watching the look of accomplishment on their faces."

As a new school year begins, the first days of class are always filled with excitement: new faces, tearful goodbyes to parents, and many moments of discovery. But Sue looks forward to helping her students develop the skills to succeed in the classroom, and build self-esteem to overcome whatever challenges they face outside of it.

At Neighborhood House, volunteers are essential to achieving our mission. Volunteers bring enthusiasm, expertise, and share diverse perspectives that foster a community of mutual enrichment. This past year alone, 3,450 volunteers provided 1.26 million dollars worth of service; helping us to feed hungry families, educate new immigrants and refugees, create safe spaces for youth, and move families from survive to thrive!

Join us as we continue our 118 year mission to serve the families of St. Paul.

A Few Volunteer Opportunities...

Help Us Create a Hunger-Free Community: Are you a passionate advocate for hunger and nutrition? Volunteers in our food markets stock shelves, pick-up donations, and help families select culturally-appropriate foods. Opportunities available on weekdays from 9-Noon or 1-4 pm.

Give Children the Skills and Confidence to Succeed: Are you an enthusiastic supporter of early childhood education? Help us create a bright future for children in our preschool and childcare programs by leading games, songs, and exciting early learning opportunities in our Skills for School and Evening Childcare program. Opportunities available on weekdays from 11:30-1:30, 12:30-2:30, and 6-8:30.

For more information or to sign up to volunteer, contact:
Anders Ringdahl-Mayland at 651-789-2524 or armayland@neighb.org

Friend of Neighborhood House - Edie Smith



As loved ones age, sometimes we discover something new about their lives and values. Housing transitions may uncover treasured, handwritten correspondence and the shifting of a close relationship can open the door to revealing conversations.

When her father's health began to decline and he asked for help writing checks, Edie Smith began to learn more about the passions that her father, a successful businessman, had nurtured in his many years as a community leader and philanthropist. During their time together, Edie learned of his love for Neighborhood House - an organization that he had faithfully supported for many years.

On the anniversary of his passing, Edie sat in the congregation of Mt. Zion Temple observing her father's first Yahrzeit. She missed her father and was reflecting on the things that were important to him. At this same service, volunteers who supported the Neighborhood House food shelf were being honored and she decided that next year she wanted to be standing up there with them.

For years Edie has shared her love for Neighborhood House as a donor and volunteer, where she is a warm and welcoming presence at many community events. Earlier this year she capped a new milestone by volunteering at her 20th food and fund drive at the Kowalski's on Grand Avenue! Every time she volunteers, Edie makes a gift to commemorate her service, and has made the decision to include Neighborhood House in her estate planning, making her a member of our 1897 Legacy Circle. Through her work supporting the hungry in our community, Edie feels even closer to her father, and shares a special connection with his legacy.

If you would like to join Edie in her fight against hunger by volunteering at our next Kowalski's Market food drive, contact Anders at armayland@neighb.org or (651) 789-2524. We will be hosting drives on November 14th & 15th and December 12th & 13th.



Thank you to all who attended and donated to Neighborhood House at Revel with a Cause.

It was an amazing evening filled with compelling stories, intense energy and incredible generosity.

With your help we raised a record **\$271,800** to support the work of Neighborhood House.



Upcoming Events

give **TO THE MAX** **DAY** NOV 12, 2015

What does Neighborhood House mean to the teens who spend hours discovering, learning, and making friends in our programs?

Get a glimpse into the lives of our youth at GiveMN.org/organization/Neighborhoodhouse



Autumn Gathering for Good **November 12, 2015** **5:30PM**

Volunteers are invited to mingle and enjoy hot beverages (coffee, hot chocolate, cider) and seasonal appetizers.

RSVP - Anders Ringdahl Mayland
armayland@neighb.org or 651.789.2524

Kowalski's Market Food Drive

November 14th & 15th
December 12th & 13th

Interested in volunteering?

Contact Anders Ringdahl Mayland armayland@neighb.org or 651.789.2524





Neighborhood House™

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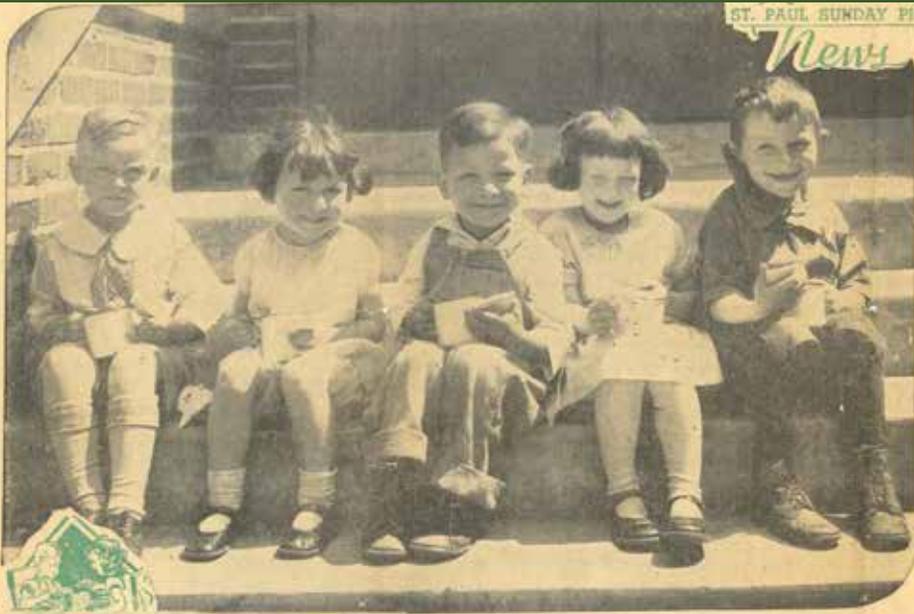
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A Blast from the Past...May 4, 1947



Scrubbed and shining, a quintet of Neighborhood House regulars of a generation ago posed for this picture on the Neighborhood House steps.

Neighborhood House friend, Bob Cohen recently forwarded this Pioneer Press article from 1947. His mother, Claire Batush (married name Claire Cohen) had been a Neighborhood House participant as a child and saved the article depicting our 50th Anniversary. Her daughter, Jody Cohen Press discovered it recently and passed it on to Bob. Thank you Jody and Bob for this amazing piece of Neighborhood House history!

ST. PAUL SUNDAY PIONEER PRESS
News about **WOMEN**

ST. PAUL, MINN., SUNDAY, MAY 4, 1947 [W]

Neighborhood House Reunion Will Note 50th Anniversary

THAT was an expensive window you broke, Benny. But you're a Neighborhood House boy. I know we can count on you to pay for the damage.
The little boy from down on the river flats brightened. It had been a bad day for him, marred by scraps with a rival paperboy that ended with the breaking of a large plate glass store front.

But the juvenile court judge was a good friend—an honorary member, in fact, of the Neighborhood House boy's club of which he himself was president.
And the judge was right; Benny, being a Neighborhood House boy, would strip and save until every penny of the required sum had been paid.

TODAY Benny, 48 years older, looks back on his Neighborhood House days as an important interlude in a career which has made him a prosperous and respected business man. And with others like him—St. Paul's leading doctors, lawyers and merchants—he has a date this week to go back to the house for a reunion celebrating the agency's 50th birthday anniversary.

To mark founding of the center in 1897, open houses have been scheduled for 8 to 10:30 p. m. Wednesday and Thursday. Guest speaker the first evening will be Rev. Frederick M. Elliot of Boston, former pastor of Unity church and a life member of the board. Speaking Thursday will be Dr. Milton G. Wallis, treasurer, and three "graduates" of the house, Samuel Lipshultz, Thomas Deberry and Robert Casanova.

On hand to welcome friends from the vicinity, from other sections of St. Paul and from distant cities will be Miss Constance Currie, director of Neighborhood House since June, 1938.

ST. PAUL was a bustling young city of 113,000 residents in 1897, when Neighborhood House first opened its doors to the foreign-born groups who had settled in the old tenement district known as "the flats."

Making up the composite population of the area were Irish and Germans who

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