

Creating a village

Written by Nettie Smith - Upper Willard Homewood
Monday, 10 May 2010 13:30



Eunita Jackson spoke passionately to over 60 of her neighbors about children and young people in the neighborhood: "They need to know that we know each other, and that we care about them and believe in them. That we're in charge and they can count on us."

The room was quiet as she spoke, then loud with enthusiastic applause when she finished. This vibrant, lively crowd met on April 11 at True Vine Missionary Baptist Church at 26th and Thomas Avenue North.

Some say creating a village in a diverse North Minneapolis neighborhood can't be done. Some say it can't be done in any neighborhood because people don't know their neighbors these days.

Well, we are doing it! We are creating a village! We are neighbors getting to know one another on many levels. There is no formal leadership, just folks who initiate and participate from their passions.

James Nelson gets block club leaders together to create safety and support. New neighbors are treated to home-made bread and a conversation about who we are and what we expect from each other. Nelson also gets the youth out on Sundays to play football! Jim Lovestar and the garden crew are on the third year of an expanding garden at 24th and Upton. Plans for the summer include monthly gatherings down at the garden with True-Vine as a rain back-up. Some folks like JoAnne Ulm, Eunita Jackson and Toni Collins meet and greet neighbors everyday by being out in their yards and taking walks and engaging with those they meet. Emma Fiala developed our website and then organized a rummage sale on the Parkway on April 17th. A number of families showed up to sell "treasures" and the rest of us shopped and chatted with new and old friends. A club for kids/youth that will be a parent- and neighbor- run place for kids to get to know each other, learn skills and hear stories from the incredible adults who live in this neighborhood is in the works.

Neighbors are creating relationships with the local businesses in the area. Al-Amin's Fish House, Rising Star Auto Sales, CVS Pharmacy, North End Hardware, Broadway Liquor Outlet, The Amazing Oriental Grocery Store and Glover Insurance have all made contributions to the gatherings. We shop local.

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Residents who want to get involved can contact:

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