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# The Observer

Volume 43 • Issue 2



## National NeighborWorks® Week

### Neighbors work together on beautification projects

Memuna Lee

On June 6, armed with spades, shovels, and 15 flats of flowers, 30 Bloomington residents showed up to beautify part of the Gridley Allin Prickett neighborhood. With the help of the Master Gardeners of Bloomington the public street corners and 11 homes had their yards landscaped, the grass trimmed and their trees cut back, kicking off a celebration of neighborhood revitalization activities nationally recognized as National NeighborWorks® Week.



NeighborWorks® Plants! volunteers gather at the Bloomington site



MCCA Board member, Gayle Rogers, assists Kathy Schubert with a landscape design project

“Clearly the beautification work we do during NeighborWorks® Week dresses up the neighborhoods in which we work. More important though is the mobilization of volunteers and residents who become more knowledgeable about their community and get satisfaction from these efforts...” said John Burrill, Executive Director of Mid Central Community Action, Inc. “The appearance of a neighborhood helps to attract new homeowners and allows existing residents to see that progress is taking place in their neighborhood. Our volunteers realize this importance and donated

a total of 172 hours to planting at 11 homes and 8 street corners in the neighborhood.” Volunteers from Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church, MCCA, Bromenn Hospital, Master Gardeners of Bloomington, and local residents celebrated at a neighborhood cook out on Wednesday June 10th at Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church.

In Pontiac, on June 11th, the Master Gardeners of Pontiac and community members in Pontiac wrapped up the week-long NeighborWorks® Week celebration by helping neighbors landscape their yards, increasing their curb appeal. “The people in

*continued on back page*

### Thank you!

Thanks to these donors:

- David Usiak
- Meijer
- Starbucks
- Jimmy Johns
- AB Hatchery

- Growing Grounds
- Jesse Baird, Firststep Realty
- Lue Walters
- City of Bloomington
- Charlotte Talkington
- Krispy Kreme

- Panera
- RetireWithCoupons.com
- Sam’s Club
- Avanti’s
- State Bank of Graymont
- Market St. Bakery

and to all the community volunteers in Bloomington and Pontiac. Thank you for making NeighborWorks® Plants! a success.

# Dates to Remember

■ Saturday, July 11

**Home Buyer Education Class**

■ Tuesday July 21 & Thursday July 23

**Home Buyer Education Class**

■ Saturday August 8

**Neighborhood Block Party 10am - 2pm**

*First Christian Church, 401 W Jefferson St, Blm*

■ Saturday August 8

**Home Buyer Education Class**

■ Saturday August 15 & Sunday August 16

**30th Annual Cultural Festival**

*Miller Park, Bloomington - culturalfest.com*

■ Monday August 24 & Wednesday August 26

**Home Buyer Education Class**

■ Saturday September 12

**Home Buyer Education Class**

■ September 14-18

**Countering Domestic Violence 40 hr Training.**

CDV will be offering the 40-hour Domestic Violence Training course September 14-18, 2009. If you would like to volunteer to help provide services to adult and/or child victims of domestic violence, please contact Deborah @ 828-8913 for more information

*Location TBA*

■ Saturday September 19

**"Diamonds Are Forever"**

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. Black Tie Event  
Silent auction (5-6pm), black tie bachelor auction (6-7:30pm), and Diamond Dance (9:30-11pm)  
*Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites (Airport), Bloomington*

■ Monday September 21 & Wednesday September 23

**Home Buyer Education Class**

Home Buyer Education classes are held at MCCA, 1301 W Washington St, Bloomington.

For further information or to register, contact Kathy Shubert, (309) 834-9245

## *The* Observer

*A quarterly newsletter of  
Mid Central Community Action, Inc.*

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Mid Central Community Action, Inc. (MCCA) is an Illinois private not-for-profit corporation with the mission of "Promoting safe and stable families, neighborhoods and communities." The agency works with government agencies, private corporations and individual citizens, including those we serve, to develop and maintain programs which address this mission.

Incorporated in 1965, the agency today delivers services to the community in three main areas. First, there is a group of countering domestic violence programs; including a shelter, emergency hot line, counseling, and intervention services for victims. We also offer the whole spectrum of traditional Community Action programs including energy assistance, home weatherization, transitional housing, and supportive case management. The third area is that of housing; again a group of programs including home ownership counseling, down payment assistance, foreclosure prevention, residential lending, and construction of housing units.

In addition to being one of 1100 Community Action agencies in the United States, MCCA is a chartered member of the NeighborWorks® America network of housing development and neighborhood revitalization organizations.

In a typical year, MCCA programs serve more than 5000 families. It also assists some 100 families in various ways to become home owners, which is considered one of the best roads to economic stability for a family.

*Promoting safe and stable families, neighborhoods and communities*

## Congratulations to Community Services Staff

MCCA congratulates Laura Grant and Teri McWethy on completing trainings this spring. In May Laura received recognition at the Illinois Assn. of Community Action Agencies Annual Conference as a graduate of the Family Community Development Program. The FCD program trains case managers to provide comprehensive family

assistance and helps them to develop the skills needed to work with Illinois' most fragile families. Laura will now continue with advanced FCD training.

In April Teri received her graduation certificate for completing the Leadership Livingston County, a leadership development program. Leadership Livingston County is a year long

program that helps participants to develop leadership skills in the areas of business and service. Monthly themes introduce the participants to various aspects of business, services and government. They also visit industry, government bodies and businesses throughout Livingston County. They build skills of leadership through discussion groups and a



Teri McWethy (center) celebrates her graduation from Leadership Livingston County

variety of monthly trainings so they can become better leaders in their own place of business and the community. ●

# 2009 Family of Distinction Honored at Award Ceremony

Becky Berry

Jacquelyn Young, a participant in Mid Central Community Action's Transitional Housing Program, was presented with a Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies' (IACAA) Family of Distinction award at a ceremony on May 3, 2009. Three of Ms. Young's sons, a valued church friend and I - as her community services caseworker - accompanied Jacquelyn to the Governor's Mansion in Springfield for the awards ceremony. The ceremony is a nationally recognized event that embodies the spirit and good will of Community Action agencies.

Jacquelyn's "story" that follows was shared during the Families of Distinction dinner, held at the Hilton Springfield:

Jacquelyn entered the Transitional Housing program in December 2008 after facing eviction because there were too many people living in her two bedroom apartment.

Jacquelyn's home became overcrowded after her adult daughter became disabled as a result of an automobile accident causing her to be unable to care for her children and herself. In March 2008, in addition to having four sons ages 10 to 18, Jacquelyn became guardian of Shannon's 5 children ranging in age from 4 to 10.

Despite struggling with a drug addiction that caused her financial problems, Jacquelyn made the decision to dedicate her life to being drug-free and to accept the responsibility of the care of 9 children and overseeing her adult daughter's needs.

Jacquelyn found help from two sources: her church family and Mid Central Community Action. Ms. Young tells a very heart-warming story about a neighbor who introduced her to her current church family which Jacquelyn credits with providing her with much of the strength she has needed to overcome her obstacles. When it came to needing a place for her large family to live, she was desperate where to turn and contacted Mid Central Community Action for assistance and was directed to the Transitional Housing Program.

An opening occurred soon after she contacted the Transitional Housing Program caseworker. The only option was a four bedroom duplex. Although it seemed her family could use more space, Ms. Young was

thrilled with the opportunity and was certain her family could manage in this size home. And, was she correct! The apartment is now a home full of love, warmth, and structure. All members of the home are very organized, respectful, friendly, and cooperative.

One of Jacquelyn's first goals was to begin working on her credit report. She dedicated her income tax return to paying off \$3612 of her \$4253 credit report bills. As her budget permits, she plans to eliminate the remaining \$641 balance.

Another goal Jacquelyn has is to establish a budget that enables her to stay debt free and to improve her credit. For a month, Jacquelyn kept track of everything she spent and structured a workable budget. Now, Jacquelyn meets bi-monthly with her caseworker to review her monthly net income and to track her progress. She readily discusses adjustments that need to be made and concerns that are impacting her budget. Jacquelyn expresses how helpful, gratifying, and "fun" this process is and how she now looks forward to paying her bills.

In addition, Jacquelyn participated in Mid Central Community Action's "Second Chance Renter's Program" in order to learn

**"The Young family exemplifies Mid Central Community Action's goal to promote safe and stable families, neighborhoods and communities..."**



more about budgeting, how to manage conflict and its resolution, how to prioritize her and her family's needs versus her/their wants, and to set realistic goals for her future.

Jacquelyn's dream is to be able to buy a home for her family when she leaves the Transitional Housing Program by the end of December 2011. The potential for Jacquelyn to reach her dream of home ownership seems possible given the fact that she has the support of her family and church family, is more than willing to work with caseworkers at Mid Central Community Action, and has demonstrated the drive, determination, and willingness required to conquer problems, maximize potential, and make the necessary changes in her life.

Jacquelyn has made great strides that have, and will continue to be life-changing for her and her family. Jacquelyn is always positive and willing to learn from any information that is given to her. This is truly a family to be recognized and to be encouraged on the path toward their dreams. The Young family exemplifies Mid Central Community Action's goal to promote safe and stable families, neighborhoods and communities: Jacquelyn and her family's stability adds to a neighborhood and community's stability.

Congratulations to Jacquelyn and her family for their cooperative demeanor and the respect they show for the home and opportunity they have been given! As Jacquelyn continues her work toward her goals over the next 18 months, we can look forward to Jacquelyn sharing more successes with us in the future!●

# Volunteers, Making a Difference



**T**hank you to Heartland Community College's Community Scholar VOL 101 class (1st year students) who raised \$1480 for Neville House programs by selling Heartland Hawks discount cards.

The students involved in the project are:  
 Erica Connolly      Haleigh Copley  
 Kirstin Copley      Kyrie Doran  
 Chris Eldert      Seth Foor  
 Kelly Gosda      Jacob Johanson  
 Ellen Mulch      Brandy Porth  
 Victoria Stoller      Haleigh Todd  
 Ariel Torres

For just \$10 you can enjoy discounts at 9 local restaurants, as well as at the Midwest College of Cosmetology, the Mole Hole, Neon Rayz and Shoe Carnival.

For more information, or to purchase a card, call Michelle at (309) 828-8913 or visit [www.MCCAinc.org](http://www.MCCAinc.org). All proceeds benefit Countering Domestic Violence programs at Neville House. ●

**M**embers of Soroptimist International of Bloomington/Normal have adopted Neville House by redecorating a client bedroom and assisting with outdoor renovation projects.

Thank you so much, Soroptimists, for your continued dedication to improvements at Neville House. ●

**C**ountering Domestic Violence will be offering the 40-hour Domestic Violence Training course September 14-18, 2009. This training is required if you would like to volunteer to help provide services to adult and/or child victims of domestic violence, please contact Deborah at (309) 828-8913 for more information. ●

# Honoring the Memory of Victims who have Lost their Lives to Domestic Violence



Countering Domestic Violence participated in McLean County's An Empty Place at the Table exhibit during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. This empty seat represents a brave woman who utilized her right to protection by seeking and obtaining an Emergency Order of Protection, only to be murdered by her ex-boyfriend three days later at her residence. The offender remains in prison.



CDV participated in our community's Hands are for Holding mini parade during Child Abuse Prevention Month. This wagon honors Duncan and Jack. Although their lives were tragically cut short, their hands are forever imprinted on our hearts.

**If you have lost a family member to domestic violence, CDV would like to honor them as a Silent Witness.**

**Although their voices have been silenced, advocates will continue to speak out about domestic violence as we do not want victims to be forgotten.**

## Quotes from Survivors of Domestic Violence

What would you have done if the domestic violence victim services program did not exist?

- "I might be dead."
- "fall apart! not sure - I would not have had the strength to carry on for myself and my children."
- "I would not have understood what was happening. I would have thought it was my fault, blamed myself, and repeated the same pattern."
- "Be a parent I don't want to be and live in mental misery."

Countering  
Domestic  
Violence



# Keep the Neville House Doors Open

Deborah White

Thank you to the individuals, churches, civic organizations, and businesses who have contributed their time, talents, and treasures to Neville House. Countering Domestic Violence (CDV) is vigilant in its efforts to reduce costs and increase funding sources to continue helping victims with safety and healing needs. As of this writing, though, we are faced with a \$252,389 loss of state funding in the \$415,914 grant for our 24-hour emergency shelter and hotline services.

We do not want to put victims at risk by not having crisis intervention services available. We need to continue to offer education and

support to adults and children who have been traumatized in their own home. It is too dangerous for families and the community at large to deal with this problem without these resources for immediate safety and longer-term healing.

And, the need for these services is growing in McLean County. With state funds, Neville House served 171 more clients providing 802 more hours of service in the first 3 quarters of 2009 fiscal year as compared to the same report period in 2008.

## How can you help?

Please consider attending the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. "Diamonds Are Forever" Black Tie Event on Saturday, September 19 at the Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites (Airport) in Bloomington. Neville House is one of the five pearl organizations to receive a financial award from this event.

Other options to consider:

- Give the cost of one of your family's movie or dining nights out to the shelter.
- Donate the cost of basic shelter security for a year (\$500) with your church, civic, or work colleagues.
- Provide supplies such as food and bus tokens; hygiene and cleaning products; paper and printing
- Collect used cell phones for the shelter.

If you have other ideas, please contact Deborah, CDV Program Director at (309) 828-8913.

To make a financial contribution to "Keep the Doors Open" please make your check payable to MCCA, write in the memo section how you want to help, and mail to: CDV Program Director 1301 W Washington St., Bloomington, IL 61701. ●

## From the Executive Director's Desk

John Burrill

I would like to begin by thanking all of our supporters and stakeholders for the increasing role you are playing in helping to operate our agency and direct its activities. You do this through financial support, volunteer activity in events or in a governance role and simply through letting us know what works and what can be improved. We appreciate it.

Every year our work seems to bring new challenges, and this year is certainly no exception. A huge concern as I prepare this has been the announcements of State budget cuts that will devastate many social service programs. We are affected in two smaller program areas providing case management and support to homeless and near homeless families, as well as supportive housing services to some of our own residents. These cuts will reduce services, although not at this time cause job losses or a complete withdrawal of services.

The much more serious concern for us now is the impact of the cuts on our Neville House/Countering Domestic Violence program. We have been advised of a 60% cut in our core grant, a cut which represents over \$252,000. We have looked at our options for managing this sort of reduction in funding, and narrowed them down to two: either to

continue to provide services as we have been until the funds are depleted, or to reduce services significantly and try to last a bit longer. Our Board of Directors has considered these options, and unanimously decided to continue the current level of services as long as we have funding to do so.

As a result of this situation, we will be putting extra emphasis on fund raising in the community to try to make up this shortfall. We are confident that the community knows the importance of the program, and will provide as much support as it can. We will also continue to hope that our legislators are able to work out their differences and move us toward a State budget that recognizes these needs.

The economic situation in the country, our State, and our communities creates increasing hardship for many of our fellow citizens as well as increasing difficulty for the social service agencies that help them. We have in the past two years made a significant investment in developing affordable housing, but the slowdown in home sales is hurting us. We still have six homes for sale in Pontiac and Bloomington, and have reduced the prices on them to encourage prospective buyers. These homes are extremely good value, and the various financing options make them an attractive option for any family ready to own their own home. Call us for more details! ●



PHOTO: VIKKI BAPTISTE

# Have you seen our new website?

Now you can donate online!

Vikki Baptiste

Have you ever received a letter in the mail asking you to donate to a great cause that you support? Chances are, you want to send a check so you put the letter aside, maybe on the pile of bills you need to pay that month. Chances are, you never got around to making that donation.

With the advent of online bill paying, fewer and fewer of us are using our checkbooks to pay for goods and services. It's all so much easier when you can just pull up a website, click link and pay your gas bill!

That kind of user-friendliness inspired MCCA to make it easier for you to give your gift online. With the click of your mouse you can save yourself the cost of a stamp, you don't have to look for an envelope, you don't even have to wait until you pay your bills each month to make a donation. Add the benefit of having a receipt instantly available and there's no need to ever write a donation check again.

If the convenience of giving online appeals to you, please know that payments are processed securely through Sage Payment

Solutions, and your confidential information will not be shared with any third party.

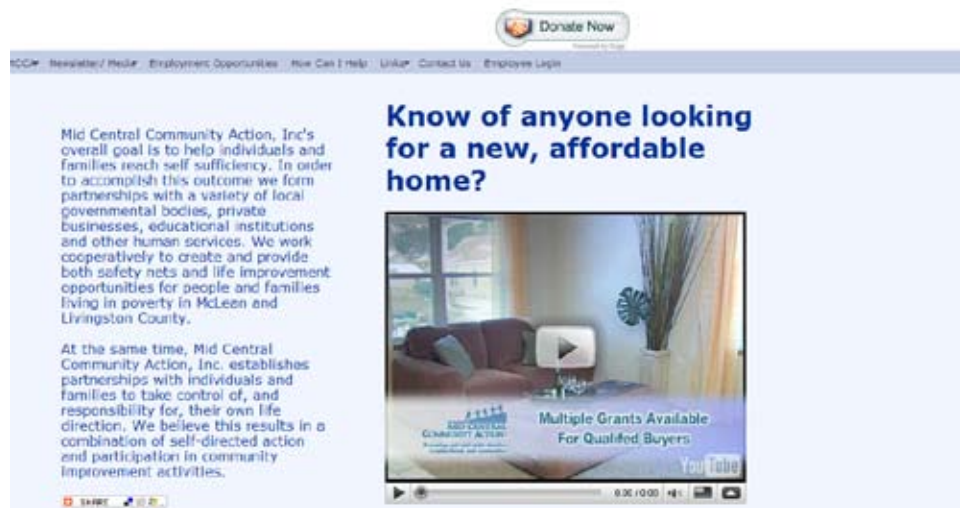
Do you feel you would like to donate, but don't want to send a large sum now? You can spread your payment out over time, and cancel whenever you need to. You may not miss \$10 a month as much as you miss a lump sum of \$100.

Does your credit card have an airline miles program? Let your donation help you reach your destination!

Convenience, security, and the ability to help to make your community safe and stable - it's a winning combination! ●



Mid Central Community Action, Inc.



# Celebrating Success and Sharing Dreams

8th Annual Awards Ceremony & Dinner

Vikki Baptiste

On May 7, 2009, MCCA held its 8th annual award ceremony at the Parke Hotel & Conference Center in Bloomington, to honor clients, community partners, volunteers and staff.

MCCA's Executive Director, John Burrill, welcomed guests and introduced Dalitso Sulamoyo, President and CEO of the Illinois Association of Community Action



Agencies.

Employees Kathy Shubert and Deborah White celebrated 10 years of service, while Samantha Haynes-Nickson, Bernadine Sticklen, Kathie Olson, Cathy Davis and Ann Howland received awards for 5 years of service.

Due to confidentiality reasons,

we cannot list all the client awards; however, Pam Westerdahl of Heartland Community College was presented with the Community Partner Award for her work with the Business Essentials programs. Volunteer



Jamie Huff (l), Lori Manning



Nacole (l), Teri McWethy

Connie Smith was awarded the STEP Award for Service, Time, Effort and Participation, while Progressive Impressions International CEO, Jamie Huff, won the Distinguished Service Award and Gwendolyn Husek received the CDV Awareness to Action award.

# What is Planned Giving?

Vikki Baptiste

Planned giving, as the name suggests, is not merely a matter of writing a check and putting it in the mail—planned gifts require a great deal of thought, and are usually arranged with the guidance of a professional who has extensive knowledge in the field of planned giving.

Most planned gifts will help to reduce the donor's estate taxes, income taxes and/or capital gains taxes, while perpetuating the donor's values. An often overlooked fact is that gift planning can help the donor better provide for their families and loved ones.

Planned giving does not necessarily refer to a donation left in the donor's will—it can provide the donor with income for life—and strategically sound planned giving vehicles can increase the donor's current income.

Many planned gifts are, however, deferred contributions which the charity receives on the death of the donor.

Giving USA reports that in 2008, giving by bequest in the United States totalled \$22.7 billion. Though this figure is down from previous years in line with charitable giving as a whole, it still is equivalent to a little over half the amount given by foundations in the same period, and is almost twice as much as was donated by corporations. When you consider



that bequests are given by individuals, this amount is very impressive!

Yet, statistics show that less than 3% of adult Americans have made provisions for a nonprofit organization in their wills, and those who have made a provision usually do not inform the charity of their intentions.

Before deciding how and what to bequeath

to your favorite charity, it is important to consult a planning professional who will assist you in understanding the legalities that relate to planned giving.

A planned gift can be in the form of cash, security, property or valuables. However, to explore the world of charitable remainder trusts, charitable remainder annuity trusts, charitable gift annuities, wealth remainder trusts and the like would take more room than we have here.

Please consider, when writing or reviewing your will, leaving a charitable bequest. The most important thing to stress is that you must know the exact name of the organization you want to donate to. For example, Mid Central Community Action, Inc. would NOT benefit from a bequest left to "Community Action". A gift bequeathed to the "Red Cross" will not directly benefit the "American Red Cross of the Heartland" which is in Bloomington, IL.

Various forms of planned giving will be covered in future issues of the Observer. For more information now, the National Committee on Planned Giving ([www.pppnet.org](http://www.pppnet.org)) can help you locate a planned giving professional, and more information can be found at [www.leavealegacy.org](http://www.leavealegacy.org) ●

*Please consider investing in Mid Central Community Action, Inc's programs by making a donation today.*

Please accept my donation of:

\_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ \$5 \_\_\_\_\_ \$other

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail your tax-deductible donation to:

Mid Central Community Action, Inc.  
Vikki Baptiste, Development Specialist  
1301 W. Washington St  
Bloomington, IL 61701

*Thank You*

Donate online with just one click at [www.MCCAinc.org](http://www.MCCAinc.org)

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**Our Mission:** Promoting safe and stable families, neighborhoods and communities  
Mid Central Community Action, Inc. serves McLean and Livingston Counties



## National NeighborWorks® Week

*continued from page 1*

the neighborhood were very appreciative of total strangers coming to make everything beautiful... it really gives a community feeling. I think when it comes to plants and making things better, it's something everyone can relate to" said Connie Kostelc of Master Gardeners of Pontiac. The Pontiac activities culminated in a neighborhood cookout with the Timber St residents.

MCCA is part of the national NeighborWorks® network, an affiliation of more than 230 nonprofit organizations that increase homeownership, produce affordable housing and revitalize neighborhoods in more



Pontiac Master Gardeners lend a hand

**"... when it comes to plants and making things better, it's something everyone can relate to"**

°than 4,400 communities across the nation. Throughout the week, A total of 41 volunteers,

donated 258 hours of labor to beautify 21 homes in McLean and Livingston counties, donating over \$2300 to the project.

During National NeighborWorks® Week, Mid Central Community Action, Inc. and other NeighborWorks® organizations across the country mobilized tens of thousands of business people, residents and government officials in a week of neighborhood change and awareness. They rehabbed and repaired homes, painted and landscaped properties, conducted neighborhood tours, recognized successful partnerships and hosted a number of events that educate, train and inform. ●



NeighborWorks® Plants! on Bloomington's west side



Rhiannon Rowlands of Pontiac wins a prize!