

Spring 2009

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THE BUTLER FOUNDATION HELPS YOUTHBUILD TRAINEES HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD

When you're doing all you can to earn your GED Certificate and learn carpentry for a career in construction, it's imperative to be able to see the books you're trying to read or the nail you are trying to hammer into a board!

So when several of the Hired Hands of YouthBuild Northern Kentucky found that the words were blurry and the nails invisible, the staff had vision issues to address. Faced with a tight budget and Federal guidelines restricting the use of budget funds for such purposes the challenge was to find ways to pay for the eye exams and glasses needed by our squinting Hired Hands.

Enter the Robert M. Butler Foundation! And thank goodness for them. Applications were submitted to the Butler Foundation for eye care for five Hired Hands. And in each instance the response was positive and almost immediate, empowering our Hired Hands to continue their hard work, seeking to change their lives and, in so doing, *"to change their stars."*

YouthBuild is a national program sponsored locally by Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission. YouthBuild has been active and growing nationally for 30 years, but has only been in action in our area for nine months. The Program—a direct assault to stem the tide of what is a drop-

out epidemic in our schools [dropout rates ranging from 25% in suburban communities to 60-70% in some urban areas] is targeted to qualifying low-income, disadvantaged young people—ages 16-24. These "kids" for a variety of reasons, lost the path to self-sufficiency and a better adult life. YouthBuild offers these 'dropouts' a rare second chance—to obtain a G.E.D. at the Newport and Dayton Adult Education Programs. They learn a trade at the Home Builders Association of Northern Kentucky; build low-income housing with Housing Opportunities of Northern Kentucky; and train with The Life Learning Center to obtain the soft skills they need to be successful in employment or higher education.

The YouthBuild experience is 50% educational, 30% construction, 10% life skills, and 10% community service. Studies have shown that YouthBuild returns as much as 10 to 40 times its cost to the community—as Trainees become successful citizens, paying taxes and avoiding costly run-ins with the legal, judicial and penal systems.

YouthBuild and its Hired Hands are hard at work; and The Butler Foundation has helped us to keep "hitting the nail on the head!"

Check out the YouthBuild USA Website to see what we're about: www.youthbuild.org.



Watasha Brown is smiling with her new glasses; thanks to the Butler Foundation

First Fridays are hopping at Community Action Gallery



If you haven't been to one of the Community Action Gallery's, First Friday Gallery Openings, you need to come check it out soon!

From 6:00pm until 9:00pm every first Friday of the month, the Community Action Gallery hosts an opening reception for a featured local artist. Guests can come and enjoy drinks, appetizers and fun conversation with friends all while enjoying the artist's creative and unique work.

The NKCAC first Friday reception each month is part of the Covington Arts District First Friday Gallery Hop and brings art and *fun* lovers to Covington. You'll find original art and good parties to celebrate it in a wide variety of galleries, shops, restaurants and nightclubs.

The Community Action Gallery gives NKCAC the opportunity to support and participate in Covington's flourishing arts community. "Covington is home to many cultural institutions and has completed beautiful historic building preservation" said Florence Tandy, NKCAC Executive Director, "we wanted to contribute to the betterment of the community." The staff at NKCAC is fortunate to have as the Gallery's curator, Arlene Gibeau, a seasoned arts professional.

The gallery opened in October, 2007 with a special exhibit of work by students of the Frank Duvenek Arts and Cultural Center. The Gallery is located at 717 Madison Avenue on the first floor of NKCAC's Administrative services center and is open to the public from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. It is closed on holidays and weekends.



Artist Carmen Bush is exhibiting her cityscapes and landscapes through April

Stop by and check it out!

Collaborative Partnership with University of Cincinnati Benefits Head Start Children

Imagine you are trapped in a world of silence. You can not find a way to connect with the people or things around you and you are unable to communicate what you want or need. The frustration and fear would be overwhelming for you and for those who love you. You need someone to help you find your way through the maze, but who?

Luckily, NKCAC has a collaborative partnership with the University of Cincinnati's School Psychology Department for the provision of mental health services to our families and staff. This partnership, in existence for 35 years, has benefited thousands of participants.

Dr. David Barnett Ph.D leads a team of Graduate/Doctorial level students to provide evaluation, treatment recommendation, outcome and assessment on an as needed basis. These highly trained and educated providers work directly with children, families and teaching staff to develop individual intervention plans that will best suit the need of the child to help enhance their educational experience. These high quality services are provided at no cost to the agency or the family.

Additionally this group of volunteers has provided training and educational sessions on topics that include parenting skills, growth and development; stress & anxiety and topics chosen by parent participants.

These dedicated volunteers are truly an asset to the staff of NKCAC and children & families of Northern Kentucky. We commend them for their service on behalf of the Head Start Program.

County News Briefs

Boone County

Neighborhood Center Supervisor, Judy Boggs along with 15 churches and several community groups provides two holiday gift programs annually. At Christmas, gifts were provided for 400 children. At Easter time, 135 baskets will be provided to the children who would have gone without. The churches and the community donate food and clothing year round to help low-income families in need.

Campbell County

The Campbell County Neighborhood Center has begun a "Practical Budgeting" series with a beginners sewing class using donated, recycled t-shirts. Some participants sewed "new" shirts and one person is showing her creativity by sewing a patchwork blanket. The center is planning more fun activities to promote saving in the summer months. Call 859-431-4177.

Carroll County

The Gap Company had a holiday giving campaign for employees at their Florence outlet center. Employees collected \$1,864.00 to donate to the Carroll County Neighborhood Center for emergency assistance funds. The Gap Company will be matching their employee contributions. We've used the funds to restock our Carroll County Food Pantry with staples and Kroger gift cards so families can receive perishables we can't stock on our shelves.

Gallatin County

Low-income residents of Gallatin County are benefiting from an increase in the federally-funded Low-Income Home Energy Assistance program. Last year, the program ran out of funds in early February, but was still able to help 364 families with about \$44,000 in assistance for winter heating bills. This year, the Gallatin County Neighborhood Center has been able to help more than 400 families with over \$100,000 in assistance toward keeping their homes warm.

From the Desk of the Executive Director

These Days

A man was in my office recently on business. As we met, the conversation evolved into something neither of us anticipated. He had already lost his company, was probably going to lose his home. This is a man who until recently had been living the American Dream as a successful entrepreneur. But here he was, sitting in my office, fighting back the tears as he told his story.



We are seeing families who have never had to ask for help before in large numbers. The old stereotypes about poverty are being pushed aside as those in crisis for the first time are realizing that “those people” really means “us.” How many paychecks are any of us away from slipping into crisis. One, two, twenty?

As we respond to the plight of the newly—and presumably temporarily—poor, I am reminded that we are more alike than we realize. If this economic crisis has a silver lining, it is that when this is all over, our society will be a little more understanding about those who struggle to make ends meet. We are already seeing some of that with new donations coming in to help those in need. The Greater Cincinnati Foundation, The Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation, Duke Energy Foundation, to name a few are providing more help than ever for families in need.

From the \$25 and \$50 gifts from individuals to those in the thousands from corporations and foundations, I believe that generosity is growing as the economy is shrinking. With such generosity, I know this country will rebound—how could it not when so many people are pitching in to help their neighbors.

I believe we will be better as a country and a region as prosperity returns. I think it will help us realize how important it is to have an economy that works for all of our society—rich and poor alike. And the practice of stranger helping stranger will grow even stronger. Now that is an American Dream I can really believe in!

Florence Tandy



Stronger Together, NKCAC’s healthy marriages initiative would like to thank the following businesses for their support and donations given to our program this past year...

- Drawbridge Inn in Ft. Mitchell
- Wal-Mart in Ft. Wright
- Vickie and Tom Wells, Massage Therapist
- Olive Garden in Florence
- Word of Life Fellowship in Covington
- Miller Printing Company in Covington

Thank you for your generosity! Kindhearted businesses like these help contribute to building loving family relationships right here in Northern Kentucky.

“Go to our website www.nkcac.org and sign up for email updates. You can also check out our blog on <http://nkcac.wordpress.com>”



Community in Action is published quarterly by Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission.

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County News Briefs

Grant County

Grant County is in the third year of preparing taxes for low to moderate income residents. For the 2008 tax season, Carrie Pugh has completed 24 tax returns to date. Some of the families are qualifying for the Earned Income Tax Credit and *all* of the families are avoiding paying for refund anticipation loans, returning an average of \$625.00 per family.

Kenton County

The City of Erlanger recently held a Government Month Essay Contest for 4th and 5th graders. The winners were Jacob Short, Mose Lattimore and Summer Tarrance all former Head Start Students! They received their awards at the City Council meeting on March 3rd. Congratulations to all!

Owen County

The Owen County Neighborhood Center’s Spring Garden project is gearing up again. With the help of the Fiscal Court we are able to purchase seeds and plants for families to start their own gardens. Save A Lot grocery generously donates hot dogs and buns for a fun grill out that day. Last year seeds were provided to more than 65 families. Plans are in the works to double that this year.

Pendleton County

Rob McDonnell is a 17 year old resident of Demossville, in Pendleton County, Kentucky. Rob is one of YouthBuild of Northern Kentucky’s “go-to-guys”. His advancement in his scholastic pursuits was rapid as he was one of a group of five Hired Hands to achieve his G.E.D. certification after only 6 months of study with our collaborative partnership with Newport Adult Education.

Head Start Trip to the Duke Energy Children's Museum at Union Terminal



(kids with the bubbles)

"Tashianna and her sister Diaviana Payne and Justin Day all enjoy the water way area at the Museum Center. Tubes, buckets and pulleys all make for a great place to play and enjoy! Over 300 Head Start families enjoyed dinner and a free trip to the Museum Center."

Northern Kentucky Head Start annually sponsors family events and field trips to local cultural and education sites.

The mission of Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission is to help low income individuals and families develop the knowledge, opportunities and resources they need to achieve self reliance.

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