

# Near Northwest Neighborhood Network



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Dear Friends,

As the Near Northwest Neighborhood Network celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of providing uninterrupted services to the Humboldt Park, West Town, and Logan Square communities, I cannot overlook the many changes that have faced us in these past years. By looking back on all of our accomplishments, I realize how important our work has been to our community. We have worked tirelessly to ensure that the development within the community will be beneficial to all of its residents. We have promoted initiatives in the areas of economic development, affordable housing, community safety, educational reform, workforce development, health, youth development, prisoner re-entry, expungement, and many others.

Now that we have reached our 20-year milestone of providing services, we must maintain momentum in these existing initiatives and continue to implement new projects that will contribute to the stability and growth of our community. We must continue to speak out against displacement, and those whose only interest is to make large profits, regardless of whom they displace and work with our working families so that they may realize their dream of owning and maintaining a home. We must also continue to create economic opportunities so that we can create living wage jobs that, in turn, allow our residents to become homeowners and business owners. We must continue to support our not-for-profit housing developer partners to secure decent and affordable rental housing. We must challenge our schools and community to make a sincere commitment to make the education of our children our number one priority. We must continue to speak for a national health plan that will provide each resident with health coverage-regardless of income or place of work. We must continue to work with our elected officials to challenge Congress to implement an immigration bill that does not punish those that come from south of the border and welcomes those from Europe and Asia. As you see, we have come a long way but we still have much to accomplish.

As NNNN celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we make a commitment to be the voice for all of our community and to work diligently to ensure that we continue to have a place in the Greater Humboldt Park community, enjoy the fruits of our labor, and to grow as one force capable of creating the plans that will provide a decent place for our children to grow, work, and raise a family. I take this opportunity to thank the hundreds of volunteers and partners for your commitment to making our community and people your priority and helping us celebrate 20 years of building community-one block at a time. May the greatness of the holiday season bring you peace as you celebrate with your families and friends and may the New Year continue to bring us success and great energy, so that we can continue our important work.

Sincerely,

Mr. Eliud Medina Sr., Executive Director, Near Northwest Neighborhood Network

## Economic Development Action Team

The Economic Development Action Team's (EDAT) primary goal is to promote economic development, and assist in the revitalization of the Humboldt Park neighborhood. However, EDAT is currently working to develop a new mission statement to comply with the many changes that they are facing.

EDAT held a meeting in September, and discussed the different directions which the Action Team is moving to target. The general consensus was that EDAT's most important focus would be

on improving businesses in the area, because it would create a domino effect on the rest of the neighborhood. EDAT will help businesses develop by marketing themselves to increase their customer base, as well as retain the businesses' loyal clientele. This goes along with their idea to attract new businesses to the neighborhood, by convincing them that Humboldt Park is a good area for expansion. To do this, it will be necessary for the government to really begin to make improvements in the surrounding area. With expanded businesses, the effect will be

increased employment opportunities for residents; it is necessary to create more business leaders by getting access to training for adults, and keeping young people in school. EDAT wants to see North Avenue turn into a fundamental destination spot for residents and visitors alike.

At our last meeting, members discussed a possible combination Economic Development Action Team/Employment Skills Action Team meeting on the Prisoner Re-entry issue.

## Housing Action Team

The Housing Action Team (HAT) is comprised of community residents, block club leaders, and housing organizations. Their main objective is to prevent displacement, and to assist the residents of the Humboldt Park neighborhood in finding accessible, affordable housing. They do this by utilizing the many contacts and connections they have developed with housing agencies, and through education and housing fairs.

Throughout the year, NNNN serves as a delegate agency of the Chicago Department of Housing. A person in need of housing will call the organization, which will then in turn contact a housing agency and help the individual find the type of housing that fits their needs. Serving as a liaison, the Housing Action Team will then do a follow-up with the individual, and if the option was not right for them, HAT will explore other routes. HAT creates a network by attending housing expositions and community events, as well as meeting with banks, housing agencies, residents, city departments, and colleges which all serve as critical resources in the community.

HAT has spent the majority of the last few months preparing for the Housing

Summit held on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. Normally, every year, HAT holds a Housing Fair, in which different agencies can represent themselves to prospective and current residents.



This year, however, it was on a much larger scale. The Housing Summit celebrated advances in housing in the Humboldt Park neighborhood and discussed obstacles to overcome in the future. The march began at 9:00am at the corner of North Avenue and Artesian, in front of the newly preserved mural, "La Crucifixión de Don Pedro," and residents and community leaders proceeded to the Humboldt Park Field House to begin the Summit. The Housing Summit commenced with speakers Alderman

Billy Ocasio and Eliud Medina (NNNN/HPEP), and continued with a panel discussion on housing issues. Professor Jose Lopez, who is the Executive Director of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, gave an introduction to the process of gentrification and displacement in Humboldt Park. A panel discussion featuring Dr. Mindy Thompson Fullilove, author of "Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It" and local community leaders addressed the topics of gentrification and displacement. The Summit then broke into small sessions, led by facilitators, with such themes as Homelessness, Rental Housing, Homeownership/Foreclosure and the Role of Youth in resisting displacement. This was followed by a mini-resource fair, which provided community residents the opportunity to visit booths, set up by different housing agencies. A resource booklet filled with various community organizations' information was also offered.

For more information about the Housing Summit, or the Housing Action Team, please contact Melissa Cintrón, at 773.489.0383.

## Employment Skills Action Team



The Employment Skills Action Team (ESAT) has a mission to preserve and increase the number of jobs in the Humboldt Park community, and to create access for residents to training and jobs. To do this, ESAT must serve as a go-between for community residents and the companies themselves. They maintain contacts with the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, and can assist those in need of work in reaching the appropriate people that can help them gain the skills necessary to enter the workforce. ESAT collaborates with Hispanic Housing Development

Corporation, the Illinois Department of Human Services, La Casa Norte, Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation, Casa Central, Vision Global, the Puerto Rican Federal Affairs Administration, Association House of Chicago, Select Remedy, One-Economy, and the Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center to reach its goals.

ESAT spent this summer preparing for its annual Job Fair, which was held on September 14<sup>th</sup>. Numerous companies in and around Chicago set up booths to give residents of the Humboldt Park area the chance to browse the different job options available to them. Some companies even held brief interviews for those candidates in which they were interested. To prepare for the

event, the Housing Action Team contacted around one hundred different companies and organizations, and distributed flyers in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. Some of the participating companies represented at the job fair included St. Mary's Hospital, TCF Bank, Vision Global, the Chicago Police Department, ABC-WLS, 77C Marketing, and Home Depot. The event was held from 9:00a.m. to 2:00p.m. at 1127 North Oakley in the gymnasium, and was a complete success with 349 attendees. ESAT met on Thursday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00a.m., to evaluate the Job Fair and discuss possible ways to improve it in the future.

For more information about the Employment Skills Action Team, please contact Niuris Ramos at 773-489-0383.

## Ministerial Caucus

The Near Northwest Neighborhood Network's Ministerial Caucus successfully brings together different pastors from the surrounding Humboldt Park area in order to discuss issues concerning the church, and the community at large. The participating ministers and church leaders hold marches, vigils, and visit families to give their condolences in the event that a violence-related tragedy occurs. NNNN's role in the Ministerial Caucus is to make sure that the concerns of the community are addressed, to visit those parishioners who are not in the same location as their church, and make sure that they have an active voice in the action team.

The Ministerial Caucus held their last meeting on October 4<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00am. They planned out the month of

October, which included a press conference on the West Side on October 11<sup>th</sup>, and the much anticipated EX 20:13 event which took place the week of October 14<sup>th</sup>.

From October 14<sup>th</sup> to October 20<sup>th</sup>, the Ministerial Caucus participated in EX 20:13. Named after the commandment forbidding the taking of life, it was a weeklong series of events dedicated to non-violence and peace, especially focusing on the Humboldt Park community. Beginning on October 14<sup>th</sup>, congregations, synagogues, churches, and mosques across the state of Illinois delivered a message of peace, and throughout the week, there were activities dealing with different aspects of violence, such as gang violence, and domestic violence. Also, houses of worship across Chicago had residents sign

letters urging legislation to commit themselves to eliminating crime in the area. The letters were delivered by bus caravan to Springfield on Monday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Finally, on October 19<sup>th</sup>, there was a march to Humboldt Park, where participants camped overnight, and a different congregation led a prayer for peace and an end to violence each hour. The activities on October 20<sup>th</sup> were dedicated to youth and their experiences with violence. They discussed the effects that violence has had on their lives, and what they would like to see take place in their neighborhoods in order to eradicate violence and crime.

For more information regarding the Ministerial Caucus, please contact Niuris Ramos at 773-489-0383.

## Project TEAM (Teachers Engaged As Mentors)

Project TEAM (Teachers Engaged As Mentors) strives to educate parents, teachers, and principals in the Humboldt Park and West Town neighborhoods on different health and education-related topics in hopes that the area's youth will in turn benefit. The six schools in the Humboldt Park region with which Project TEAM directly works are Von Humboldt Elementary School, De Diego Elementary Community Academy, Stowe Elementary School, Lowell Elementary School, Moos Elementary School, and Roberto Clemente Community Academy.

Currently, Project TEAM is focusing on one main program. Along with the University of Illinois Extension, Project TEAM created the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program Family Nutrition Program, which is a series of nutrition-related education workshops geared towards parents. Some examples of topics are Healthy Weight and Physical Activity, and Shopping for Food/Reading Labels. The program's objective is to improve the parents' nutritional health, and because they are the main food providers for their children, each child's overall health will improve as a result. Project TEAM hopes that the program will positively affect the neighborhood's health, and aid in preventing problems such as childhood obesity in the future. The first workshop occurred on October 26<sup>th</sup> at Von Humboldt Elementary School, and dealt with dietary quality, food budgeting, food safety, food security, and healthy lifestyles.

Because school began at the beginning of September, there was much planning to be done. On September 19<sup>th</sup>, there was a No Child Left Behind meeting, where the Von Humboldt Parent Advisory Council met to discuss the budget (Their next meeting was held on October 17<sup>th</sup>). There was also a Parent Leadership meeting on September 20<sup>th</sup>, in which parent representatives from the different area schools gave input on what they expected out of the upcoming school year. Roberto Clemente Community Academy met on September 24<sup>th</sup> to discuss fundraising, and Lowell Elementary School and West Town Leadership United offered training for parents and community members in West Town and Humboldt Park on September 28<sup>th</sup>, in areas such as raising self-esteem, leadership development, how to seek support, and information on topics such as affordable rent/housing, immigration issues, and after school activities.



In October, along with the nutrition workshop, there was a Project TEAM meeting scheduled on October 29<sup>th</sup>. Principals from the six participating schools met and discussed fundraising and grant possibilities for the future.

One new project that Project TEAM is beginning to look into is a youth health study. Dr. Michelle A. Kelly, who is an Associate Professor for University of Illinois at Chicago's School of Public Health, hopes to conduct the first ever thorough health study of adolescents in the Humboldt Park region. She plans to study a group of eighth graders until they graduate from high school, to learn critical information about health and developmental issues among young people. The project would not begin until the upcoming school year, and at the moment, NNNN is assisting her in getting support from the different schools which would most likely receive incentives from the project, such as a new computer.

If you would like to know more information about NNNN's Project TEAM or any of its projects, please contact Lucia Tellado at 773-489-0383.

## Youth Action Team

NNNN's Youth Action Team (YAT) offers after-school, educational programs for Humboldt Park Youth, through its collaboration with the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. Batey Urbano is the product of this effort, and it hosts events, workshops, and tutoring to bring societal awareness to the young people, and ensure that they have resources available that will assist them in succeeding in the future.

One of the major opportunities available to youth through Batey Urbano is working with the completely youth-run online radio station. Young people can host their own show, or even just learn about the inner-workings of a radio station. On Tuesdays, Batey Urbano offers Drama 101, which is meant to introduce youth to Latino Theater History, production development, and acting. Eventually, the group puts on a full production for the surrounding community. There is an open computer lab in the center for research, and volunteer college students available to make tutoring accessible for those who wish to receive it. These educational programs began in October, and run until the summer, Monday through Thursday, from 3:00pm to 7:00pm.

This past summer, Batey Urbano was occupied with its six week summer program for youth. In the first week, the youth began training in radio journalism,



which involved learning programming, protocols, editing, and mixing for the online station. Next, they participated in a film workshop with the Institute of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture, where director Andres Gonzales led the class with a workshop about film making. The youth spent the week writing and producing a short film, entitled "Why Are You Running?," and they carried out every aspect of the production on their own. During the program, the youth also shot a public service announcement with Grammy-winning artist Kanye West, attended and performed at the Barrio Arts Fest, and worked on the Paseo Boricua clean-up, where, afterwards, everyone went back to Batey Urbano to watch the premiere of the youth-made film. YAT also held two fundraisers in support of the mobilization to Washington D.C., in which they raised over \$2,000.00. 47 young people then went to Washington D.C., where they learned about lobbying, and were immersed in hands-on education about immigration. In September, YAT helped to organize a youth-run stage, where community information was distributed, and students from the Batey performed at Milliken University in Decatur, Illinois.

There were many exciting events going on in October. On October 6<sup>th</sup>, there was a fundraiser and DVD release for the short film, "Why Are You Running?," and on October 12<sup>th</sup>, the Insurgent Juan Zarate, and Intelligence Committee performed, along with holding an open mic. Elizardi Castro performed his one-man show "Made in Puerto Rico" on October 13<sup>th</sup>. October 19<sup>th</sup> was Batey Skate Night, where \$100 went to the person with the best trick, and October 20<sup>th</sup> was a poetry open mic, featuring Jackie Arroyo, Xavi Burgos, Reyess, and DVS. The much-anticipated October events were of course those in celebration of Halloween. From 7:00pm to 10:00pm, on October 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, Batey Urbano hosted a Halloween celebration entitled, "Haunted House in da Hood," and Haunted Paseo Boricua took place on October 31<sup>st</sup>, from 3:00pm to 7:00pm, where people were able to visit scary stations such as a cemetery and haunted house, get candy from local businesses, and free face painting for kids.

Please contact Michael Reyes for more information regarding NNNN's Youth Action Team. For more information about Batey Urbano, visit [www.bateyurbano.org](http://www.bateyurbano.org), or [www.myspace.com/bateyurbano](http://www.myspace.com/bateyurbano), and for the radio station, [www.radiobatey.org](http://www.radiobatey.org).

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**NNNN Unveils New Website**

The Near Northwest Neighborhood Network is happy to announce that it is in the process of creating a new website. Along with being more efficient, NNNN hopes to allow better access to community information, such as job postings, trainings, community workshops, and housing

availability. There will also be links to a calendar of upcoming events which will be updated on a daily basis and a feature that will allow visitors to donate online using either a credit card or a PayPal account. NNNN intern Chris Jaffe has finished the website, and looks forward to the positive impact that it will

have on NNNN's ability to make progress in the Humboldt Park neighborhood by relaying information to its residents in a very effective manner. Check out the new website at [www.nnnn.org](http://www.nnnn.org).

**Upcoming Fundraiser**

In honor of its 20<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary, NNNN will celebrate with a fundraiser on November 30th. For the past 20 years, NNNN has been addressing issues associated with Humboldt Park and West Town, such as gentrification, a lack of political representation, underperforming schools, a lack of business development, unemployment, and an infrastructure that continues to deteriorate. The fundraiser is meant to

set off the next period in the life of NNNN, in the most positive way possible.

It will be held at the Garden Manor Ball Room, located at 4722 West Armitage, and will begin at 6:30pm. NNNN plans to honor Congressman Luis A. Gutierrez and dedicate the event to Elvira Arellano, for her contributions in defense of immigrants. The tickets are priced at \$1,000.00 per table of ten or \$100.00 per person.

For further information, please contact Betsy Nazario at (773) 489-0383.

