

## Neighbors United Meeting Summary - January 22, 2009

### Attending

1. Brenda Banks, *Angels on Wheels & Cross-Training Center*
2. Jodi Cooper, *Mosaic Community Development*
3. Vicar Aaron Decker, *First Lutheran Church*
4. Pr. Tom Emmett, *Metropolitan Community Church*
5. Gaytha Endicott, *First Baptist Church*
6. Kay Lynn Goldner, *First Unitarian Church*
7. Christian Gray, *Mosaic Community Development*
8. Brittany Hanson, *Mosaic Community Development*
9. Louise Jeffrey, *First Unitarian Church*
10. Kevin Marik, *Metropolitan Community Church*
11. Pastor Kip Mickelson, *First Baptist Church*
12. Melanie Naughtin, *First Central Congregational*
13. Modesto Olivo, *First Lutheran Church*
14. Carla Peterson, *Metropolitan Community Church*
15. Rev. Kate Rohde, *First Unitarian Church*
16. Pr. Carlos Schneider, *Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church*
17. Wanda Selzer, *First Lutheran Church*
18. Rev. Jonathan Sloan, *First Presbyterian Church*
19. Brian Smith, *Community Meal Volunteer & MCD Board*
20. Millie Smith, *Community Meal Volunteer*
21. Dr. Russ Smith, *University of Nebraska, Omaha*
22. Bruce Wallace, *First Presbyterian Church*

### Overview

- Members of the Park Avenue faith community met on Jan. 22, 2009 at Metropolitan Community Church; lunch was generously cooked and provided by MCC church members.
- The primary focus of the meeting was to celebrate the Neighbors United accomplishments of 2008, and collaboratively brainstorm and plan the group's direction for 2009.
- Meeting agendas (attached) were distributed, brief introductions were made, and the meeting was co-facilitated by Dr. Russ Smith and Brittany Hanson.

### Looking Back at 2008

#### *Reflections*

- Louise Jeffrey from First Unitarian Church shared a reflection on both her personal and FUU's congregational involvement in Neighbors United and the Community Meals initiative.
- Bruce Wallace from First Presbyterian Church also shared a reflection focusing on the importance of and growing involvement in the Community Meals for FPC's youth.

## *Accomplishments*

- Brittany Hanson presented a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the development and accomplishments of Neighbors United throughout 2008; the presentation, *Celebrating 2008*, can be viewed in its entirety by clicking [here](#). Highlights included:
  - *January 24, 2008* - Park Avenue area faith leaders gathered for a roundtable discussion about the current neighborhood efforts of their faith communities, as well as the needs and assets in the area.
  - *February 14, 2008* - Faith leaders reconvened in Feb. to continue the roundtable discussion. Meeting participants identified three main issues on which they were interested in collaborating: hunger, relationship development, and poverty.
  - *Faith leaders get to work*. Over the next several months faith leaders continued to gather--collaboratively planning and implementing ideas.
  - *Augusts 2, 2008* - Our first community event, a Saturday afternoon Block Party, brought over 60 community members out to Hanscom Park on one of the hottest days of the year.
  - *September 6, 2008* - Over 50 volunteers attended the two hour Community Meals Volunteer Training session the week prior to the launch of the weekly meals.
  - *September 13, 2008* - The Community Meals initiative launched, serving over 128 meals the first week
    - Over 2,200 meals were served in 2008.
    - Over 130 volunteers have participated.
    - 2 neighbors (formerly homeless) are now in housing.
    - 12 groups have successfully worked together to feed neighbors and build relationships.
    - Hundreds of winter clothing items have been collected and distributed.
    - On average, about 145 meals are served each week.
  - *November 22, 2008* - After several months of brainstorming, our collaborative group finally finds a name and tagline for itself: *Neighbors United, an interfaith community together in service*.

## *Storytelling*

- Several additional meeting participants shared personal stories, anecdotes and reflections about both their involvement in Neighbors United and/or the Community Meals initiative in 2008.

## **Looking Ahead at 2009**

- Handouts of the meeting summaries from January and February 2008 meetings were passed out to all meeting participants.

## *Small Group Brainstorming*

- Meeting participants numbered off and broke into three small groups to brainstorm ideas about the direction and involvement of Neighbors United for 2009.
- 25 minutes were allotted for small group brainstorming; a recorder and reporter were selected in each group.
- Each group recorded their ideas on flip chart paper and were asked to prioritize main ideas.

## *Large Group Sharing*

- After 25 minutes of brainstorming, each small group posted their flip charts on a wall and reported their ideas to the larger group. Each group's ideas are listed below:

### Group One

- Invite Stephen Ministers from local faith communities to participate in Community Meals
- Importance of providing non-threatening approaches
- **Monthly Health Screenings at Community Meals (short term priority)**
  - Kountze Memorial parish nurse
  - Nursing Students
  - Basic check ups
  - Nutrition
  - Parenting Skills & Child Care
- **Social Service Referrals at Community Meals (med/long term priority)**
  - A social service coordinator?
  - Need & want to be ready when folks are ready to share needs; resources to supplement relationships
  - Information distribution
  - Trainings/presentations for volunteers and neighbors
- **Monthly Barber (for men & women) at Community Meals (short term priority)**
- Addictions Support
- Childcare in Neighborhood
- **Community Gardening (med/long term priority)**
  - For Community Meals (partnering w/ UMM & MCC?)
  - For neighbors
- Better documenting of numbers, outcomes, outputs, and successes
  - A committee/taskforce for strategizing & implementing
  - Noting indirect impacts in addition to guest #'s, value of donations, guest demographics, and documentation of success & effective practices
- Sustainability
  - Collaboratively increasing number of volunteer meal groups involved

### Group Two

- Hospitality Volunteers
- Addressing issues of safety around kids
  - Need at least two adults
  - Remain out in public
  - More help/materials for Gail & Daniel Schriber (arts & crafts corner)
- Games during Community Meals
- Movie night/afternoon at Community Meals
- Christmas/Thanksgiving dinner?
- Flea market/Swap meet
- More outdoor stuff/activities in general
- Community Garden
- Hooking people up with social services

- Haircuts
- Community Center

### Group Three

- Anticipating an increased need for meals
  - In frequency
  - In locations
- Connection to social services
- Employment Issues
  - Work with existing agencies
- Increasing Awareness about Neighbors United & Community Meals
  - Concert
  - Special Sunday Service (coordinated among Neighbors United faith communities)
  - Block Party
  - Invitation program to get more churches involved

### *Major Themes/Actions for 2009*

- While listening to each group present their ideas Dr. Russ Smith deduced several themes present throughout many of the groups ideas; the themes are listed below:
  1. Build on meals by adding services (and/or number of meals)
    - Fun activities
    - Personal/individual services
    - Mentoring/Connecting
    - Social/health services & screening
  2. Neighborhood-based services to meet needs
    - Childcare
    - Community Garden
  3. Document Activities and Outcomes
  4. Long -term Community Center
  5. Promote Neighbors United and Expand Involvement
    - Common message
    - Block Party
    - New congregations & faith communities
  6. Be explicit and spell out more regarding organization and mission
    - Logo/branding
    - Slide show
    - Brochure updates

### **Wrap Up**

- The next meeting will be Feb. 26, 2009, 11:00-1:00, First Baptist Church; we will start sorting through and putting actions plans to ideas in working groups.
- Community Meal - Every Saturday, 11:30-1:00, First Baptist Church