

Weed & Seed Report

September 2008

The Weed and Seed Coordinator continues to facilitate the monthly Allied Stakeholders and South Neighborhood Resource team meetings. In addition to the monthly Stakeholders meetings, the Coordinator regularly attends Joining Forces for Families team and neighborhood association meetings in each of the neighborhoods, the monthly Allied Partners meetings, and several regular City staff meetings regarding Allied.

Leadership Training

The coordinator continues to work with the South Metropolitan Planning Council (SMPC), the South Police District and GLC-trained and other neighborhood leaders on various projects in South Madison. **Penn Park Partners** has had a very successful summer series of family friendly events in the Park. The South Police District used some of their "Seed" money to help sponsor these events, and the coordinator and neighborhood officer supported the agencies and community groups in the planning and implementation of their events. Between mid-July and September 1, a total of 10 Penn Park Partners events, National Night Out and the Johnny Winston Street Ball Tournament have happened at the Park. The **Penn Park Partners**, with the assistance of a Parks Department intern, also conducted a survey in the neighborhood about what residents and Park users would like to see in the Park. They will use the information collected as a spring-board for their next activity: developing a 5-year strategic plan for future Park activities and improvements. Two of the GLC-trained leaders in Burr Oaks were elected to the neighborhood association's executive committee in June, and they continue to recruit neighbors to participate in association and other community building activities.

Truancy Initiative

The coordinator has been working to identify another vendor/agency for the truancy initiative for the fall school semester, as the truancy specialist that we'd been contracting with has relocated. As part of her work with the **Penn Park Partners**, she encouraged Will Green of **Mentoring Positives** to apply for the Mayor's Emerging Neighborhoods Funds for a mentoring program in the park that uses basketball as an incentive. He has been running the program at Penn Park two nights a week, and his group of 15-17 older teens/young adult males participate consistently. Given the initial success of the Penn Park program, the coordinator has encouraged Will to submit a proposal for a truancy project that involves mentoring South side middle and high school youth that are at risk for becoming truant.

Youth Court

The Weed & Seed Coordinator maintains the responsibility for staffing the Allied Community Youth Court Steering Committee that provides oversight for the Court. The Steering Committee is made up of residents, neighborhood officers, the educational resource officer at the local high school, the municipal court judge, staff from Youth Services of Southern WI and two neighborhood-based service providers. In general, the Allied Youth Court hears 3-4 cases per month, and the majority of those cases are referred immediately from Municipal Court for juveniles, that is held at the Boys & Girls Club on that same day. The most common violations were disorderly conduct, retail theft, and possession of marijuana. Sanctions imposed by the community jury have included: community service, writing assignments, and Youth Court jury duty. Also, two jurors that were former defendants last year, had such a positive experience that they remain committed to volunteering as a peer juror. Last month, Youth Services and the Dane County Timebank staff held an orientation for police officers that have been identified as department liaisons to peer courts in each police district. Gloria Reyes, the new neighborhood officer in Burr Oaks, and the coordinator are exploring the possibility of an expansion of the Youth Court to South Madison.

Prostitution Initiative

The **Community Coordinated Response to Prostitution** (fka the prostitution workgroup) continues to meet and evaluate the success of their initiatives: the Badger Wellness Workshop and The JOHN (Joining and Organizing Healthy Neighborhoods) school. With support from the Emerging Neighborhood funds, Project Respect staff have extended their summer hours, as recommended by the agency's consumer advisory committee. They continue to work with neighborhood residents to identify high "traffic" areas so that they can more effectively target their outreach for the Saturday evening activities. Last month the South PD completed a reversal – a prostitution "sting" operation – that resulted several arrests, with 8 individuals opting for the JOHN school. Of the 8 individuals, 4 are primary Spanish speakers. The JOHN school subcommittee is exploring the possibility of delaying their originally scheduled October JOHN school, so that they could have time to both pursue another reversal and set up simultaneous JOHN school programs in both English and Spanish.

South Side

South Madison Generations (SMG) is a project that brings Quaker seniors together with Boys & Girls Club kids and CDI kids, and it is a collaboration with Weed & Seed, the South PD and the South Madison Coalition for the Elderly. These groups join together for fun activities and build lasting relationships. We recently rented MSCR pontoon boats for a morning of fun and fishing on Lake Mendota. Last month we also held an intergenerational picnic at Quaker Housing, with great food, entertainment, and activities. Kids from the MSCR summer program at Penn Park and the elementary school classrooms at CDI had a great time interacting with the seniors and all enjoyed a visit with the MPD K-9 unit star, Ivan and his handler, Officer Henry Wilson.

In response to concerns raised by neighbors, the South Metropolitan Planning Council (SMPC) submitted a *Neighborhood Planning Grant* to the City of Madison to engage the community in a productive discussion about public safety. The SMPC, in partnership with the Weed & Seed program, will host a series of three Family and Community Town Suppers (FACTS) – energetic, interactive events that bring people of all ages, race, and socioeconomic classes together to discuss important issues over a meal. Through FACTS scheduled for fall of this year, we hope to have an open and honest dialogue about safety concerns on the South side - how “public safety” is defined, who gets blamed, and how race and poverty factor into our perceptions about what it means to feel safe in one’s neighborhood. With the assistance of the Weed & Seed coordinator, the SMPC has identified community members that will help recruit FACTS participants, as well as help plan each of the three events. Our first FACTS event was held on Thursday, August 28th – we had more than 40 South side residents in attendance.

The coordinator, in partnership with the South Police District Patrol Lieutenant Stephanie Bradley-Wilson, continues to work with community leaders in reviving a group that was formed to deal with issues of youth violence at the South Transfer point. The **South Madison Peace Partners** is a group of community volunteers coming together to promote peaceful relationships in South Madison. In addition to working to address some of the concerns at the Transfer Point, they are encouraging neighbors to join them in being visible at local events, such as National Night Out and the Streetball Tournament. They are also considering working with the neighborhood associations on their neighborhood watch efforts, including the safety walks in the Burr Oaks Neighborhood. They have organized an ice cream social at Penn Park for later this month – they hope to share information with neighbors about their vision for the group and recruit more participants for their peace-keeping activities.

Allied

The coordinator continues to support leadership and capacity building activities in the Allied neighborhood. The Allied Dunn’s Marsh Neighborhood Association continues to organize a mobile food pantry that serves an average of 120 households per month; they have also sponsored or co-sponsored three successful community meals this summer – a meal that featured neighborhood Mexican cooks in June, BINGO in July, and a public safety-themed meal in August (in partnership with the Allied Task Force’s safety and security subcommittee).

The coordinator has also been working with the Dane County Timebank in the development of their Allied membership network and Time Dollar Store. The Timebank has requested the assistance of City staff to identify low-cost or free space in the neighborhood to pilot the Time Dollar Store, which they believe will encourage neighbors to become more engaged in their community while meeting some of their basic needs. Every hour that residents spend volunteering in the neighborhood is counted as an hour of “time dollars”, which they can then spend on personal care items at the store.

The coordinator has also been planning for the 2009 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site with MAP staff. MAP has identified a site coordinator, and she is scheduled to attend IRS training next month in Waukesha. MAP has also submitted a grant to the IRS to add to the City funds for the operation of the site during tax season.

Finally, the coordinator worked with the **Amigos en Azul** group to plan and implement a Car Clinic in the Allied neighborhood. Amigos officers target their clinics to Spanish-speaking residents, and their services involve car seat safety checks as well as window tinting tests. At their Allied event, the Amigos officers saw 14 cars and checked more than 20 car seats. They also sold 2 booster seats, and got a small donation from an appreciative family.