

9/1/10

9/1 - Wilmar
19771

DT: Wednesday, September 01, 2010

TO: City of Madison CSC

CC: Marsha Rummel, 6th District Alder
Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center Board of Directors

FR: Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center

RE: 2nd Round of 2011/2012 Funding Consideration

Please excuse the clumsiness of reading a prepared statement. You might think after nearly ten years at the helm of the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center the need to prepare a written statement would not be necessary. Yet, the matter before this committee tonight (consideration of 2011/2012 funds) and its impact on arguably one of Madison's finest not-for-profit record of success compels me to do so.

Here's why. In the most simplistic terms, I do not want to omit any pertinent testimony. We appreciate the complexities and the time commitment of all to the process. We also have followed along to the best of our abilities. I am a bit perplexed, however, why the committee would consider these funding cuts to the Center when outcomes and indicators tell us things are successful in our community because of the collective efforts of many people and through programs like those offered at Wil-Mar

Consider the choice of turning out legions of supporters to attend meetings where funding decisions are made versus turning out legions of supporters to ensure well-organized events are held in the interest of building community while raising funds to support programs for the needy and vulnerable. This past summer alone through weekly events at the Center and monthly events in the community, we have drawn tens of thousands of people into our sponsored programs and services.

Or consider the choice of turning out legions of program participants to attend meetings where funding decisions are made versus working directly with these participants on a daily basis. In the past week alone, the Center signed off on a summer camp serving dozens of children, our weekly meal program for the most needy attracted nearly 150; our food pantry served nearly 50 families; our senior program served nearly 100; our computer resource lab continues to attract standing room only participants, nearly 20 teenage youth served nearly 200 hours of community service and finally a facility use program attracted over 800 participants.

In our opinion, Wil-Mar's well-rounded and diverse array of programs and services works to the extent of defining what being a focal point in the community means.

Then there is perhaps the ultimate question that we ask ourselves and I am quite confident you ask yourselves—does all this work to the benefit of the community?

Consider this tale as but one example of how our work does in fact change community in positive ways.

A recent food pantry drive saw one individual fill their porch with non-perishable items from front step to front door and post to post. A conversation with this individual revealed that not too long ago this mother of three was in desperate need. In the interest of time, I will spare the reasons for her plight in favor of what she and Wil-Mar accomplished. Needing emergency food services our pantry and meal programs were there and most importantly, this mother needed quality after school and summer camp child care services so she could re-enroll in school. Wil-Mar's youth programs were there. Now back on her feet, she felt compelled to return the favor in this most meaningful way.

In the interest of developing a community, if the tale ended here, most folks might be satisfied. It does not. Of greater interest to us, we asked this mother, why did she remain and invest in her home for she could have chosen to "move-up" to a more stable area. Her answer is one we have heard repeatedly, ***"I stayed because this community represents my values and most importantly, celebrates those values through community-wide festive celebrations."***

As noted, this type of experience has been repeated in scores of instances over the years and subsequently, we have recognized that our community is stronger because of it. Yet, much work remains as visits to various programs and services for the needy and low-income remain stable and in some instances have increased.

Our work then is not yet complete. We have, however, noted the changing dynamics and added to our workload a developing renovation plan for the building to meet the changing dynamics. The renovation plan is still in its very early stages. As a result, we respectfully ask this committee to be patient and at minimum recognize our good work and acknowledge success through recommending our reasonable request for support.

Finally, I'd be remiss if I failed to mention that earlier this year there was talk of allocating time next year to thoroughly review the process of how Madison's neighborhood centers are awarded funds from the City and suspend until then making any sweeping changes in this cycle. The Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center supports such an effort. Yet, it appears now sweeping changes are being considered. We ask, with all due respect, what has changed that has resulted in the current considerations?

I thank you for your time today.

I thank you for your service.