

Weed & Seed Report

April 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 support the graduates of the South Madison Grassroots Leadership College (GLC) training series. The coordinator continues to work with South Metropolitan Planning Council (SMPC) and neighborhood leaders – including one of the leaders from the GLC group - from Burr Oaks to help plan the association meetings and encourage more neighborhood participation in the association. The coordinator also continues to support resident leaders that formed the Penn Park Partners – a joint initiative of BANA (Bram's Addition Neighborhood Association) and the neighborhood police officer. They have assembled a group of neighbors, providers, community groups and elected officials to bring more positive activities to Penn Park. The group is in the initial stages of developing a 5-year strategic plan for the Park.

Truancy Initiative

The truancy specialist from MY CRIB continues to work with about 11 youth – the majority of whom attend Toki. The W&S coordinator, the Youth Services Coordinator, MY CRIB staff and MMSD staff met last month to evaluate the progress of the project. Both the school social worker and truancy specialist reported that there are more girls that need support through this type of program. The school social worker reports that there are fairly low numbers of truant youth at Toki that live in Allied – though there are an increasing number of youth that have moved to the area around Toki from Allied. The group agreed to have the Toki social worker refer youth that have attendance issues that may not be classified as “truant” but at risk for becoming truant – they estimate another 5-6 youth in that category. There was also agreement in the group to allow the truancy specialist to continue to work with youth once they have moved from Allied.

Youth Court

4-5 cases are being referred each month. Judge Dan Koval continues to have municipal court in Allied for area youth and will automatically refer the defendants from Allied immediately to the Allied Community Youth Court. The court's steering committee met last month to talk about how to best engage the neighborhood officers in the court – the coordinator, staff from Youth Services and the two neighborhood officers will be working together on further defining the police role in the court. There was also discussion about the need for a youth court in SW Madison (Hammersly/Betty's Lane/Teresa Terrace). We are trying to identify funding sources for this expansion.

VITA site

The Allied VITA site has been much slower this year – likely due to the decrease in populations, some technical difficulties at the site, and the horrible weather. We hope to increase the numbers of taxes filed with the economic stimulus rebate – the site manager sent out a press release about how the VITA site can help people file for their rebates – she has had two offers from local radio stations and the public access TV station, WYOU, to talk about this issue. She has also done additional outreach through the food pantries around the site.

South Side Initiatives

Penn Park Partners, which includes neighborhood residents, the neighborhood officer, the Boys & Girls Club, MSCR and others, continues to meet monthly. Several residents, including youth, have reported that they are uncomfortable using the bathrooms at the park shelter. The group is working on making improvements to the shelter bathrooms, particularly by adding stall doors. They have sent a letter to the Alder asking for her assistance with this issue. She is working on setting up a meeting with City staff and Parks Commissioners to hear from the participants.

in the Youth Voices (Mapping Project) about their concerns about the bathrooms. The group has also suggested that they could identify volunteers that would be willing to do a clean up and painting project for the bathrooms as well. In addition to the bathroom improvements, the group would like to organize a basketball league for teens and tweens in the Park. Will Green, of Mentoring Positives, has submitted an application to the *Hands Across South Madison* grant program of the town of Madison and the South Metropolitan Planning Council to develop a mentoring program that would involve basketball at Penn Park – he will be notified at the end of the month.

The **Community Coordinated Response to Prostitution** (fka the prostitution workgroup) has developed two subcommittees – one to work on the deferred prosecution project (JOHN school) and one to further develop services for women that are prostituting or at risk for prostituting (Badger Wellness Workshops). The JOHN school group has met three times in the last month, and they have planned the first “school” for the 21st of May – they are anticipating 10-12 participants. They have also come up with a name for the program – **Joining and Organizing Healthy Neighborhoods** – and have developed materials to give to the “johns” that are arrested explaining the program. The Badger Wellness Workshop subcommittee has also met to plan for an expansion of services. Project Respect received some Emerging Neighborhood funds to expand the hours for the Saturday evening group, which will allow the staff more opportunity to do outreach in the neighborhood. The services may include: health information/health checks, JFF services, a Narcotics Anonymous group, treatment referrals and one-on-one support. They plan on expanding the Saturday hours at the end of April.

South Madison Generations, an intergenerational Weed & Seed sponsored project, has held two events to date – a cookie decorating project and an Easter Egg Hunt. Youth from the Boys & Girls Club baked sugar cookies and brought them over to Quaker for decorating – youth and elders decorated the cookies together and shared some of the cookies with children at CDI and homebound elders in Quaker. Older adults and Quaker and youth at Boys & Girls club filled plastic eggs that were hidden in and around CDI for the children at the Center. Boys & Girls Club youth made Easter bags for the children and helped CDI staff supervise the egg hunt, while the neighborhood officer and OCS graduate student intern colored with the children waiting for to participate in the egg hunt. The next event is a craft/talent fair at Quaker – Boys & Girls Club youth will come to Quaker and together the youth and seniors will make jewelry, paper flowers, origami figures and sing some songs together.