

Project Neighbors

Neighbors Place– The First Year

What's it like having eighteen women living in Neighbors Place? I'm writing this from the perspective of a person – who happens to be male – who has an office in the building and is in at least five days a week. It's great!

I come in early, about 7:00. Typically, a couple residents stop my office on their way to work to wish me a good day. I try to walk the halls every day to see if anything is OK. Some days I'll get a request to fix a dripping sink or change a fluorescent light bulb.

The Neighbors Place population has been relatively stable. Since taking occupancy in September (the top floor) and December (the 2nd floor), perhaps four individuals have moved on. But with the partnership with Housing Opportunities, a new tenant is always on the waiting list.

About half the women work, the rest being on Social Security or disability income. For the most part, the apartments are as neat and clean as Felix's room in *The Odd Couple*. There is a palpable sense of pride among the residents: "This is my home."

During the summer, the southern patio was often occupied with women enjoying the warm weather, chatting with each other. Now that it's cold outside, the lower level, "Her Place," gets more use. With comfortable furniture, a TV, game tables and an exercise machine, there is relief from cabin fever. But easily the most popular feature of "Her Place" is the stack washer and dryer.

We've had some social events for the women. A local contra dance group holds dances in "Her Place" once a month and the ladies are invited. There were Christmas parties and carolers in the hallways and an occasional birthday party. Mostly I observe one or two women cutting out coupons, playing cards or watching a movie on DVD.

With rare exceptions, Neighbors Place is a quiet, safe and economical place to live. I should clarify that. It is always safe and economical. A few times the smoke detectors have gone off (if one beeps, they beep in all the units) because someone has burned her toast. And I get an occasional call from a resident who has locked herself out of her apartment. Neighbors Place was an experiment in small, efficient housing. It seems to be working.

A letter from Darryl Jackson

On August 29th, 2015, my life took an unexpected turn which has had a significant impact on me personally, as well as on the Valparaiso community. While this incident has created an enormous amount of controversy, it has produced extremely important dialogue here in NWI, amidst the current climate in our nation. We have been afforded a great opportunity to turn the corner with an issue where both sides involved have signed a joint statement. The statement had four parts: 1) Acknowledging my heightening of the situation, 2) calling for continued dialogues, 3) calling for the implementation of quarterly events, and. 4) calling for mandated Implicit Bias Training for Sheriff's deputies across Porter County. Project Neighbors has been instrumental in supporting me and this effort by attending meetings, engaging in thoughtful dialogue, and providing a stage for my statement to be read publicly. I want to thank the Valparaiso community, Project Neighbors, the HRC, and individuals across the nation for their support and encouragement throughout this process. I look forward to being a part of the change moving forward.



Hannah Langhoff and Ron Kuker working at Neighbors Place in 2014.

Inside this issue

Valpo HRC.....	2
CATIS Mexico.....	2
VU Volunteers.....	3
Park Place.....	3
WVLP.....	5
NEO on the Move!.....	5
Hilltop's 20th Anniversary.....	6
New Board Members.....	8
Bias Motivated Crimes.....	9

Special points of interest

- Project Neighbors wins Outstanding Nonprofit Agency Award
- Our newest family– the Delgados
- Project Neighbors teams up with Housing Opportunities for Park Place

Valparaiso Human Relations Committee

In 2015, the Human Relations Council made several recommendations to Mayor Costas. At its meeting on March 24, 2015, two motions were passed. The first “expressed concern about the absence of diversity in the City workforce” and recommended “adoption of a plan designed to make the workforce better reflect the population of the City.” Another motion expressed “urgency related to implementation of ValpoNext Plan, Initiative 3: Embracing our diversity, including staffing and funding, and recommending that it become a top priority in the first year of the City’s five-year strategic plan, which is being developed now.”

Subsequently, during the HRC meeting on May 26, 2015, Mayor Costas announced that he will appoint an ad hoc committee that will gather information and make recommendations related to a) affordable housing in Valparaiso, b) the City workforce and increasing its diversity, and c) a response to the Indiana RFRA controversy and possible anti-discrimination ordinance. This group, chaired by Bruce Berner, is now referred to as “Altogether Valpo,” with three sub-committees: a) hiring in City government, b) inclusion in the City, and c) affordable housing.

In July 2015, the HRC approved two additional recommendations to the Mayor. First, it recommended that “the Mayor pursue the adoption of a City anti-discrimination Ordinance, as expeditiously as possible, addressing discrimination (both intentional and the use of neutral practices with a disparate impact) based on age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, military service, national origin, race, religion and sexual orientation.” Second, it recommended that “the Mayor include development of a plan to diversify City Boards and Commissions as part of the task of the first sub-committee [of AltogetherValpo].”

Finally, during its meeting on September 22, 2015, the HRC approved a motion acknowledging that Valparaiso Community Schools (VCS) desires to create a more diverse workforce and recommending that VCS “adopt a plan designed to make its workforce better reflect the population of the City and the schools.”

During the September meeting, members of the HRC and the broader community discussed a police (Burns Harbor & Porter County Sheriff) incident in Valparaiso on August 29, 2015. Members of the community in attendance at the meeting expressed their concern and outrage about this incident, just off Monroe Street, that led to the arrest of a young Black male (driver), after he and his friend had stopped briefly on Monroe Street to pick up another friend and go out to dinner. Several questions were raised, including why a Burns Harbor police officer made a stop/arrest in Valparaiso; whether the vehicle was stopped because all three occupants are Black; why the arresting officer acted in an unprofessional, disrespectful manner; and, even if a stop was justified, why did a double-parking incident result in an arrest. In response to a request that the HRC take a position on the incident, members of the HRC agreed to review information (including the full video recording) related to the incident and then determine, at a special meeting, its position.

A special meeting was held on October 13, 2015, and the HRC considered a draft resolution, however, action on the resolution was postponed until the November 17, 2015 meeting. By that time, the Sheriff, the individual arrested (Darryl Jackson), and Mayor Costas had issued a “Joint Statement” taking a conciliatory tone and calling for certain actions to be taken by the Porter County Sheriff, including implicit bias training and an annual report containing demographic information on those stopped/arrested by Sheriff’s officers. At the November meeting, the HRC adopted a Resolution supporting the efforts of the Sheriff, Mr. Jackson, Mayor Costas and the Burns Harbor Town Council to “find a positive resolution to this matter,” and committing to use “this incident as a learning experience to assist in improving police-citizen relations and to facilitating healthy and constructive dialogue across lines of difference within the community.”

During the Project Neighbors board meeting on November 21, 2015, the Board determined that PN would monitor the commitment made by the Porter County Sheriff as part of the Joint Statement.

CATIS Mexico

This year thousands more people now have access to clean water. Critical research on new low-cost water filtration technology is underway today, including new methods for removing toxic levels of fluoride. In fact, this January, executive director Dylan Terrell will present CATIS Mexico’s practical research on this front at an international course in Thailand. The impact our supporters facilitate is far-reaching, and we are very excited that our research may help people over the world.

Researching and developing solutions is one aspect of our work. We have placed over 1,000 ceramic filter systems, the majority in rural community homes. We also designed a new rainwater harvesting system and installed fourteen of these systems - along with dozens of ceramic filters - in seven rural communities, which will provide more than 170,000 liters of clean water per year. These systems will guarantee a clean and healthy water supply for 6 schools, 24 homes, and hundreds of people. Those installations also served to train dozens of community members in how to build cisterns in the future. We plan on greatly expanding our filter distribution and capacity building program in the coming year.

This is just a small portion of the work you have helped support this year. To see





BRO Volunteers from Valparaiso University working on Park Place

Valparaiso University Volunteers

Last year (2014), about 200 students from Valparaiso University volunteered to help with Project Neighbors efforts. This was not glamorous work: demolition (which they seemed to love), hanging and finishing drywall, painting, and constant clean-up. Most of this work happened at Neighbors Place. 2015 has been a transition year with no major project. However, in the spring twenty-five students spent two Saturdays cleaning debris out of a hoarder's house. Clad in full body suits and dust masked, these eager and fearless students made short work of a task rejected as impossible by Rebuilding Together.

Later in the year, a small group of Middle Eastern V.U. students helped install six front yard lights along the South Morgan Blvd. Project Neighbors duplexes. The result was a dramatic brightening of this dark stretch of road. End-of-the-year yard cleanup was accomplished in November by members of BRO, a chapel-based service fraternity and their friends.

Next year (2016) will offer plenty of service opportunities with the creation of Park Place, the conversion of the former Sun Appliance store on north Calumet into fourteen Neighbors Place-type living units. This is a collaborative effort of Housing Opportunities and Project Neighbors. We expect and need all the V.U. volunteers we can get on this major endeavor.

Park Place

Alliances create strength and increase what is possible. Last year Housing Opportunities agreed to partner with Project Neighbors in the operation of Neighbors Place. So when the opportunity to purchase the former Sun Appliance building at 1117 North Calumet came up, PN went to Caroline Shook, Executive Director of HO, and asked, "Is there need for more Neighbors Place type-housing?" Her answer was, "Absolutely!"

A purchase agreement was written and accepted by the owner and Caroline called back and said, "Instead of PN having to again raise lots of money to purchase and remodel the building, why not let HO do that? We've got the money. And PN can do what it does best: manage the volunteers to create the new space." PN liked that idea.

The purchase was closed on November 13. City approval has already been achieved and now the task is to do the design work and apply for a state building permit, a process which will take 60 to 90 days.

The building will be called Park Place and will consist of fourteen efficiency apartments, each containing a sleeping room, kitchen and full bathroom. A common room and small management office are also planned. Volunteers will be needed for demolition, framing, drywall, painting, floor covering and trim. Work should begin after the first of the year and be complete by mid-summer, 2016.

Our Newest Family

More and more of us are getting to know the Delgados, the lovely family that Annie Terrell (Pat and George's daughter) promoted for a score of good reasons in September and Project Neighbors moved into a sweet little three-bedroom bungalow just five weeks later. We had liked what she wrote about hard-working, determined Claudia and her bright children, two of them Annie's first-grade students at Spry School in Chicago. The family's living situation was brutal, Annie wrote. All seven crammed in a one-room studio over a storefront on a busy, dangerous street. Could we help?

Yes, we promised...thanks to a small army of friends who responded to the call.

We would need everything, we proclaimed over the internet and neighbor to neighbor: furniture, bedding, linens, and kitchenware, knowing that the Delgados would be coming with only their bare necessities. And EVERYTHING came, magically, in torrents of eager generosity. On the October day that Claudia, Carlos, twins Jochabed and Amiud (age 6), twins Kassandra and Esmerelda (age 12), and 14 yr. old Pilar poured out of the Terrells' rented van at 608 Milton St. - directly across from Memorial School's lush playing fields - 910 square feet of a completely furnished, pantry-stocked, newly-painted and scrubbed, lovingly landscaped home greeted them. Hosts of human angels, known and anonymous, had left their mark. The explosion of happiness that followed defies description. Not a dry eye in the crowd!

One month later, that happiness is still there, in spades. And, oh, is it ever contagious! The children,

intelligent, polite, creative, are all doing beautifully in school; Claudia and Carlos enjoy Gloria Dei's ESL program two nights a week; employment is beginning to happen.

You who have already spent time at 608 Milton and inhaled that family's unwavering good cheer had to have been greatly cheered yourself? And grateful...for Annie's challenge, the community of responders, and Claudia's dream. Stay tuned.



The Delgado Family

Project Neighbors Receives Outstanding Nonprofit Agency Award

Neighbors Corporation received Porter County Community Foundation's 2015 Outstanding Nonprofit Agency Award. With the completion of Neighbors Place, Neighbors Corporation is able to provide low-cost, permanent housing for single women. "Project Neighbors' goal is to build healthy families and neighborhoods where diversity of all kinds is welcomed and cherished," said Barb Young, President of Porter County Community Foundation.

"We're very excited to be receiving this award," said Michele Nix from Projects Neighbors. "Over the years I've had the opportunity to see firsthand the impact our work has had on so many individuals and families. The addition of the 18 units of housing at Neighbors Place allows us to reach a larger number of people in need, in this case single women. We're so proud of the work that's been done and look forward to witnessing the positive changes Neighbors Place will bring to these women today and for years and years to come."

We were always low key in our presence," said Paul Schreiner, Project Neighbors Executive Director. "That changed 20 or so years ago when we developed Hilltop Neighborhood House, which actually led to the creation of Neighbors Place. It was like dominoes falling; one thing led to another. It simply was an idea whose time had come, and the availability of the old HealthLinc building made it possible. Amazing things happened! Lots and lots of people made my life exciting for a year and the result is amazing." He continued, "You really can't see the value because the real value is the sense of community that exists amongst the 18 women, many of whom have never had a place of their own. Now they have a home for the next year, the next 10 years or for the rest of their lives."

Along with the award, Neighbors Corp gets to select a nonprofit to receive a \$1,000 grant to the organization's endowment fund.

Valparaiso's Community Radio Station, WVLP-LP 103.1



For those of you who don't know about WVLP, allow me the pleasure of shedding some light on it. As of October 2002, we have been broadcasting 24/7. Thanks to the vision, dedication and persistence of three individuals (George Terrell, Rick Watson, and Paul Schreiner), Neighbors Corporation (Project Neighbors) was granted an FCC license to operate a not-for-profit, 100 watt community radio station. Self-funded by donations, underwriting fees and fundraisers and a boxcar full of volunteers, WVLP will celebrate fifteen years of continuous broadcasting next year. WVLP has one part-time, paid employee, station manager Gregg Kovach. He balances the blend of talk, music, recorded shows and underwriting spots to keep the listeners' interest. Dedicated to the community,

WVLP features locally produced music and Valparaiso citizens talking about locally important issues.

WVLP is always looking for fresh ideas, new show hosts, and new underwriters. You can get involved by contacting Gregg Kovach M-F between 8:00 AM and noon at 219-476-9000 or via email at info@wvlp.org. If you live beyond the 100 watt listening area, you can tune in WVLP on the web at WWW.WVLP.org where we can be heard worldwide.

Did you know that there are over 62,000 adults age 18 years or older in NWI who do not have a high school diploma?

NEO On The Move!

In the spring of 2011, Project Neighbors (PN) did what it does best – respond to a need in the community. When Portage Adult Education (PAE) was being shut down, three PN board members formed **Neighbors' Educational Opportunities** (NEO), a 501 (c) (3) organization. With help from the Valparaiso Law Clinic and a \$100,000 loan from Project Neighbors, NEO assumed the helm of PAE's adult education and alternative adult high school programs in July 2011.

Fast forward five years and NEO is truly on the move – figuratively AND literally! In its first four years, NEO has helped over 1200 students earn their high school diploma or equivalency diploma (GED). Over 800 adults turn to NEO each year to complete their high school education, prepare for and test for the high school equivalency (GED) test, remediate their skills, or learn English as a second language.

When Sirena (19) had to drop out of high school in her senior year to care for her mother, she thought that the door was closed to earning her high school diploma; then she heard about New Vistas. She was able to enroll and manage a flexible, part-time schedule that allowed her to earn her missing credits and graduate in 2015, and move on to college.

When Ben (24) was a senior in high school, he was told that he did not have enough credits to graduate. Discouraged, he dropped out of school and got a minimum wage job. When he tried to return to school the following fall, he was not allowed to re-enroll. Ben turned to NEO's adult education program, earned his GED and enrolled in a training program to become a welder.

For students like Sirena and Ben and thousands of others, NEO's Adult Education program and New Vistas High School, a public alternative high school, are game-changers!

After decades of delivering these adult education programs from the same location in Portage (as PAE and then as NEO), NEO has been asked to vacate the former Garyton School that it leases from Portage Township Schools (PTS) because PTS has plans to use this 42,000 square foot building for their own use.

NEO has a contingent purchase agreement on a piece of commercial property in Portage. While NEO has secured the funds to purchase the property, it is now trying to secure the funds for its renovation. NEO plans to reveal the details of this move by the end of January.

While this move is a daunting endeavor, it is also an opportunity to expand the valuable programs offered by NEO. NEO plans to collaborate with Ivy Tech to offer certification classes in the manufacturing, medical, and other business fields with this move.

NEO seeks to leverage its community support into financial support in order to secure a place for students like Sirena and Ben and the thousands of students in need of these programs.

For more information, visit NEO at www.neoadulted.org



Hilltop Celebrates 20 Years

A conversation between the 1995 Founding Director of Hilltop Neighborhood House, Ed Senne (ES), and its current Executive Director, Jennifer Wright (JW).

ES: It hardly seems possible that Hilltop Neighborhood House has been fulfilling its mission for 20 years. In my little document, "HNN: The Early Years" (Electronic versions available on request), I described its first five start-up years. Please outline for us the current Mission Statement and the different services that HNN is now offering.

JW: Yes, in 1995 the State of Indiana signed our Articles of Incorporation and Hilltop Neighborhood House became a 501 (c) (3) Not-for-Profit Organization. This is the beginning that we are celebrating this year. The Mission remains as always: "To empower families to succeed by providing affordable childcare and early childhood education and by connecting families with other needed services." Specifically, Hilltop provides 1) the childcare and pre-kindergarten curriculum (0-5 years old); 2) after-school and summer programs at Walt's Place on Locust Street for school-aged children (ages 5-18) with tutoring, free meals and recreation; 3) a food pantry serving over 400 people per month; and 4) adult education program (i.e. GED, computer skills, etc.)

ES: Some folks think of a childcare center essentially as a baby-sitting service, allowing parents to have a job or to finish degree work. Tell us how the reality of Hilltop's childcare services is different from that assumption.

JW: HNN offers a comprehensive Kindergarten Readiness Program within its childcare program, especially targeting children of low-income families in Porter County. To qualify for subsidized care, parents must be working or attending school. Teachers are trained for this work, many having degrees in early childhood education. They also are required to participate in continuing education studies.

The program is accredited by the State following a program called Paths to Quality.



ES: From the beginning HNN set diversity as a high priority. What is the present picture of that priority?

JW: Some are inclined to call Hilltop a "little United Nations." Currently, in the childcare program, 39% of the children are minorities and in the after-school program, 100% of the enrollees are minorities. Minorities are also well represented in the staff.

ES: How many families receive scholarships or vouchers from the State of Indiana?

JW: Currently, 70% of the HNN families receive scholarships for childcare. In the after-school program, it is 100%. State vouchers are limited, and the waiting list in Indiana is now at 14,000.



ES: Would you please comment on some of the benefits families have experienced from our work with them?

JW: Hilltop has been able to prepare children, even from poor families, to truly succeed as they enter the community schools. Their parents are exuberant about the advantage it has given them. At the same time it has enabled many of those families to rise above their former troubled financial conditions.

ES: In the beginning, Immanuel Lutheran Church in Valparaiso sponsored HNN as an Unlicensed Childcare Ministry. Tell us about the current status of the relationship between HNN and Immanuel in this ministry.

JW: We are pleased to be working as a ministry and grateful for Immanuel's sponsorship. We fully expect to continue that relationship into the future. In fact, that relationship is currently being reviewed with a view to offering yet more opportunities for Immanuel people to engage in volunteer activities, both in the childcare and the after-school programs.

To learn more about Hilltop, go to <http://www.hilltophouse.org/>



Project Neighbors Documentary

A documentary about Project Neighbors is in the works! Producers Pat Wisniewski and Ben Schreiner have teamed up to tell the story of Project Neighbors and its journey to help those less fortunate. The final product will be a one-hour documentary film that will be made available to public television. To date, they have interviewed several key individuals from the early days of Valparaiso Builders Association and the current Project Neighbors organization, in order to create a trailer, which can be used to raise the funds necessary to complete the film.

Ben is currently the owner of a full-service creative media production studio in Chicago, where he is working on a wide range of storytelling content marketing and media services. A creative and passionate artist, he brings a wide range of skills that will help to create this documentary. He also brings first hand knowledge of Project Neighbors through his own personal experiences growing up in the midst of the organization's efforts.

Pat is owner of For Goodness Sake Productions in Valparaiso and her passion is producing documentaries. She is currently one of the producers on a documentary entitled *Shifting Sands*, which was the concept of local environmentalist and executive producer, Lee Botts. Three years in the making, *Shifting Sands* is due to be completed in 2016 and air on public television in April. It will explore the diverse ecosystem of the Indiana Dunes and illustrate how this landscape has been a crucible pushing the region towards more sustainable ways to reconcile our economic needs with those of our natural world.

Ben and Pat plan to work closely with Project Neighbors in order to tell the amazing story of this organization.

Valpo Next: Affordable Housing

Throughout 2014 and into 2015, the city of Valparaiso engaged in a community dialogue to establish long-range goals for the next 25 years. Out of this well-orchestrated effort came nine initiatives involving transportation, city beautification, local culture, and others (you can read the entire document at <https://www.ci.valparaiso.in.us/DocumentCenter/View/3358> . Among the initiatives was "Embracing Our Diversity," and one of the sub-initiatives under that heading was the following:

"Welcome all (not only in word but in deed), by ensuring affordable housing for disabled and minimum wage workers in Valparaiso, through a joint initiative of the city and the non-profit sector. This will require the city to develop a housing strategy and staff resources to implement it."

The Valparaiso Human Relation Council created a subcommittee to address "Embracing Our Diversity." Called Altogether Valpo, this subcommittee created three sub-subcommittees: city hiring practices, inclusion (local civil rights legislation) and affordable housing. This last committee must make a recommendation to Altogether Valpo and in turn to the Human Relations Council as to how to fulfill the ValpoNext pledge.

Frankly, achieving affordable housing for all will be a challenge. Land costs and the desirability of many to live in Valpo keep housing costs high. Professional builders seem to be building for the more affluent segment of the population and the not-for-profit players (Habitat, Housing Opportunities and Project Neighbors) struggle to acquire land at a realistic cost. If you have creative ideas or any knowledge of how other communities have tried to achieve this goal, please contact Paul Schreiner at schreiner1927@aol.com.

Kate Gong - New Office Manager

Project Neighbors is fortunate to have a new staff member on the team. Kate Gong is a Valparaiso native and attended Indiana University for her undergrad and Valparaiso for Law School. She has worked at various local non-profits over the past 12 years and has experience ranging from case management to legal counseling to property management to foreclosure prevention. This wide range of skills fits perfectly with the mission of Project Neighbors. Kate is married to Hugh Gong, a statistics professor at Valparaiso University. They have 3 year old puppy named Luka who enjoys being walked at Sunset Hill park. Hugh and Kate enjoy gardening at their home and in addition to a large garden, they also have cherry, peach, plum and apple trees.

With a strong sense of humor and a caring heart, Kate has a passion for helping anyone in need, which is the core of Project Neighbors. We look forward to working with Kate to continue to build upon the many success stories Project Neighbors has had over the years.



New Project Neighbors Board Members

This year has seen exciting growth in board membership with the addition of 3 new members. Dr. Heath Carter, Byron Martin, and Chris Pupillo bring a wealth of knowledge, passion, experience and YOUTH to the board.



Dr. Heath W. Carter is an assistant professor of history at Valparaiso University and is the author *Union Made: Working People and the Rise of Social Christianity in Chicago* (Oxford, 2015), as well as the co-editor of two forthcoming books. Since moving to Valparaiso with his wife and three children, Heath has become deeply engaged in local and regional campaigns for racial and economic justice. He was recently appointed as the chair for the Valparaiso Human Relations Council.



Byron R. Martin is the Director of Multicultural Programs at Valparaiso University. He is a regular speaker and on the Board of the Racial Unity Leadership Summit (RULS), that connects the work of local ministers and clergy to a network of

resources to bring all people to unity. Originally from Mesquite, TX, he has a B.S. in Psychology and M.Ed. in Higher Education from Abilene Christian University in Abilene TX. Byron brings a passion for inclusivity for underrepresented populations on campus and “in his free time” is often a guest lecturer both nationally and internationally at many universities on the topic of diversity.

Christopher “Pino” Pupillo is a Valparaiso resident since 1993 and a strong community activist. A husband and father of three, he is a freelance creative professional with broad experience in graphic design, website development, public relations and video production. Chris has long been a strong and outspoken advocate for Valparaiso Community Schools and public educators. Over the course of eight years, he helped shape public opinion in favor of remaking neighborhood schools in Valparaiso, manifesting in the passage of two local school finance referendums in the spring of 2015. He is also a strong supporter of transparency in government, diversity as a community asset, and lifting up the voices of the marginalized constituencies.



The addition of these individuals further strengthen the intellectual “horsepower” of an already stout board of directors. Their individual (and collective) insight and energy will surely bring new ideas and opportunities to Project Neighbors. We look forward to great things to come, and we thank them for being part of this organization.

Project Neighbors
454 South College
Valparaiso, Indiana
46383



Phone:

219-465-3131

Email: neighborscorp@gmail.com

Bias Motivated Crimes

This fall there were several swastikas painted on the north side of Valparaiso near the Jamestown Apartments, Hunter's Point Apartments, and El Amigo on Calumet Avenue. This summer there was a swastika painted near Temple Israel on Evans Avenue, and a swastika and racial slurs were painted near the home of an African American couple in Hammond.

These are not rare occurrences in Northwest Indiana. The Community Research and Service Center (CRSC) at Valparaiso University has developed a database on bias motivated incidents going back to 1990. Bias incidents are defined according to the Anti-Defamation League to include "behavior which constitutes an expression of hostility against the person or property of another because of the victim's race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity/national origin." Defined this way, bias incidents include both criminal and non-criminal behavior.

The project originated when a series of bias incidents occurred in Valparaiso, beginning with an attack on the Union Community Church in 1997 and then a series of swastika paintings and cross burnings between 2000 and 2001. These events raised questions as to the extent and frequency of such incidents. To answer these questions, the CRSC began collecting data on these incidents that were reported in the *Northwest Indiana Times* and *Post-Tribune* between 1990 and 2015.

The current database includes over 380 incidents with an average of 15 per year and highs of 30 in 2001 and 32 in 2009. Detailed information about each incident, including an interactive map that locates each incident, is available at NW/biasincidents.org.

Incidents range from murders and attempted murders, shots fired at the Northwest Indiana Islamic Center, swastika paintings on or near Jewish Temples, cross burnings on the lawns of African Americans, harassment of individuals, and random racial slurs painted on vacant buildings. Most are racially motivated (75.5%) and directed at individuals (39.1%).

In the early 1990s, the incidents were most likely to occur in Lake County, but more recently the number of incidents in Porter County exceeds those in Lake County. When broken down by city, the Valparaiso area accounts for the largest number of incidents (74), followed by Merrillville (28) and Hammond (27).

The good news, if there is any here, is that there has been a recent decline in the number and severity of reported incidents. At the same time, the data indicate we still have a lot of work to do reduce these even further.

Project Neighbors Board of Directors:

President: Jeffrey Lewis: contributed Kate Gong New Office Manager and New Board Members

Vice President: Ivan Bodensteiner: contributed Valparaiso Human Relations Committee

Secretary: Lois Reiner: contributed Our Newest Family

Treasurer: Sharon Mortensen

Larry Baas: contributed Bias Motivated Crimes

Heath Carter

James Henderson

Gregory Jones

Jan Jones

Hannah Langhoff: Edited all articles

Marjorie Leoschke

Ted Ludwig

Gail Lutze

Bryon Martin

Rebecca Reiner: contributed NEO on the Move!

Chris Pupillo

Ed Senne : contributed Hilltop Celebrates 20 Years

George Terrell: contributed CATIS Mexico

Pat Terrell

Michael Willard : contributed Valparaiso's Community Radio Station, WVLP-LP 103.1

Executive Director: Paul Schreiner: contributed Neighbors Place– The First Year, Park Place, Valparaiso University Volunteers, Project Neighbors Documentary, Valpo Next: Affordable Housing, and Why Support Project Neighbors Financially?

Office Manager: Kate Gong: assembler of newsletter and contributed Project Neighbors Receives Outstanding Nonprofit Agency Award

Project Neighbors

454 S. College Avenue
Valparaiso, Indiana 46383

Phone: 219-465-3131
E-mail: neighborscorp@gmail.com



Why support Project Neighbors financially?

The amazing accomplishments of Project Neighbors over the past forty-six years (housing families with children; housing homeless women; creating daycare, healthcare, community radio, adult education, and economic development; ensuring civil rights; and empowering similar efforts in the larger community) have been accomplished with virtually no government money. In the beginning, all the cash came from the pockets of the committed inner circle, the “board” and their friends. Through personal relationships, financial support has come from a few others who, when asked, have been generous.

Today, with a small paid staff, Project Neighbors is able – and willing – to be very responsive. Take the case of the single mother of five. Within days of learning of her homelessness, a house was purchased, repairs made and paid for, and the house fully furnished. While most furnishings were donated, PN purchased sheets, pillows, a computer, a TV, and other needs. We just recognized the need and wrote the checks. We were able because people gave money.

On any given day, we might replace a water heater, re-shingle a house, purchase space in the local newspaper to inform the public, purchase tools to fully engage student volunteers in a construction project, or buy donuts to consume during the work-break while we share “the big picture” with those students. We can do this because people gave money.

Last year, Project Neighbors’ staff supervised over 4000 hours of volunteer labor, and that will be duplicated again next year. The result of all of these activities is a better life for our neighbors and their children and a more just community in which to live.

Walt Reiner used to say, “We middle-class people have to let go of a little bit of our security.” For him it was not charity but rather responsibility.

Please give. Here’s how:

Send your tax deductible contribution to Project Neighbors in the enclosed envelope (if you have received a hard copy of this newsletter) or visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/ProjectNeighbors> and click the donate now button.