



In memory of Robert D. Muhammad (1974-2014)
Seeds of Promise Host Neighbor. Host neighbor Health and Wellness Impact Team Chair. Leader. Husband. Father.

Robert Muhammad was a great spirit, Lafayette Street resident, husband, father of eight children, worker, student and leader. He was a resident volunteer leader and chair of the Seeds Health, Wellness and Nutrition Team. We would like to share the website that his family created if you would like to contribute at www.gofundme.com/e81mu4

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By residents. About residents. For residents.



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SEEDS
of PROMISETM

FALL 2014

Sharing a Seed

The Seeds Read is published by residents. This issue of positive change, strong community values and leadership is in memory of Robert D. Muhammad who represented those things and more as a man, community resident and Host Neighbor.

His comments in last year's issue about the health project he helped lead with fellow residents, Host Neighbors and partners are examples of his excitement, passion and philosophy of service: "I am truly hopeful and prayerful that the excitement I feel, and that I believe the other Host Neighbors have, will be contagious in our community."

Thank you, Robert.

Seeds of Promise

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The Seeds Read welcomes any comments and suggestions. For our readers, if you have address or general information to share please feel free to email us at seedsofpromise@gmail.com



Ron Jimmerson,
Executive Director
and Ann Marie Rivera,
Host Neighbor and
Crime Prevention
Organizer

Ron Jimmerson & Ann Marie Rivera Growth and gains in economic opportunity and safety

As Executive Director Seeds of Promise, I have witnessed rapid growth in new programs and success. Many of those things have been planned and unplanned for resident-led positive change in the newly expanded Seeds Area (Hall, Jefferson, Burton and Eastern). Last year I laid out how that growth can address root causes of neighborhood violence and instability.

Root causes being addressed---crime

One new role to address the root cause of violence is the City of Grand Rapids Community Development Block Grant for Crime Prevention. You'll hear more about this from Host Neighbor Ann Marie Rivera. We appreciate what the city has done in awarding us this grant. Through this work we will bring the Seeds value of sustainability and self-governance to get at root causes of crime because we will help residents develop their own solutions to crime.

Employment and neighborhood entrepreneurs are key

Seeds is also focused on job and wealth creation to address violence and instability. It is impossible to address crime if we are not building financially secure families. That means supporting our neighborhood talent to address unemployment, job skills training and economic opportunities. You will read on Page 5 about how the Fifth Third SEEDS program did some of those things through a resident-led business competition that awarded a variety of \$10,000 investment awards to three resident entrepreneurs.

We are also improving our 2012 job training program to prepare residents for job placement. At the same time we are creating economic opportunities for others to take advantage of the things residents said they wanted Seeds to develop like the SEEDS program! Just as we are training residents in self-governance we want families to be trained in employment and job-building skills.

A Neighborhood will prosper if those who live in it will lead it

We can also create an improved community through resident engagement. I am very proud that we have been successful in making our community sustainable by giving residents an opportunity to use their talents and resources to govern themselves. We have been ahead of schedule in this goal of measurable progress in civic engagement, direct resident leadership and governance. On March 2014, Host Neighbor Valencia Cooper joined Kalif Akbar, Robin Walker, Ludie Weddle and Floyd Willis as Seeds Board of Directors. After completing extensive community governance training sessions and individual projects supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, they are now flourishing board members who replaced me and the founding board. They are residents of this Seeds neighborhood.

This proves that the 'bottom-up' process works. After governance training sessions, Host Neighbors voted on their council constitution on January 19, 2013 and held elections voting for their peers in council positions on January 13, 2014. As 20 plus Host Neighbors they are now involved in other organizations, community activities and running Seeds impact teams. The challenge is how we create more engaged resident leaders for a sustainable and safe neighborhood free from root causes of instability.

I think we are on the right course. We just need to fine tune things like our organizational structure, training and development of new residents coming in who want to govern their community. The success that you'll read about proves that the bottom up process works. In developing people in the community as we are doing right now will drastically reduce the crime rate. Instead of building more prisons we are building resident leaders and supporting children to get at the root causes that are saving the public money.

New resident leader and new growth for Seeds

I agree with Ron. Building people as empowered residents builds a safer neighborhood. My name is Ann Marie Rivera and I am a Seeds of Promise Host Neighbor helping to make the Seeds Neighborhood safer. As a resident volunteer leader and member of the Host Neighbor Community Leadership Council trained in self-governance and project management, I am excited to use those skills as the new Seeds of Promise Crime Prevention Organizer working through the City of Grand Rapids Grant. My role is inspired by my experience with crime and refusing to let it stop me. My job will be to reach out to victims of crimes such as burglaries, assault and batteries, and working with them to lift them up so that they can become leaders. I want to help more residents solve the crimes that affected them. For this year, I am helping residents to not see themselves as a victims, but as leaders.

Turning fear into empowerment for their own solutions to public safety issues is the Seeds way of doing things. I am also glad that the city agreed and is encouraged by our track record of lifting up residents to be leaders of their own community improvement. I agree with Ron, this is not a surprise. For over a year, I have learned with 27 other Host Neighbors how to change things in our neighborhood. Now I am excited to work with police and partners who believe that residents have the knowledge and talent to make our neighborhood safer.

You may think it a little odd to be so excited about crime! I certainly am enjoying working with other Host Neighbors in training and my individual community improvement project (supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation). But crime is a calling for me because I have been a victim in a lot of situations who was scared. Nevertheless, I looked back to get something out of it and learn how to help somebody else. Enough is enough! Now I am looking for others who feel the same way---not only to report crime but respond to it in a resident-led process. Please contact me at 616-710-5730 or all4seeds@gmail.com if you are interested to know how we can help make the community safer or if you want to be a Host Neighbor like me---supported through training and financial resources to lead the community!

Ann Marie Rivera *Ronald B. Lawrence*



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Host Neighbor Profile

Robin and Thomas Walker Host Neighbor Family leaders helping to feed other families

Robin and Thomas Walker are a husband and wife leadership team, long-time Burton Street residents in the Seeds neighborhood and supporters of Dickinson Academy. As Seeds of Promise Host Neighbors becoming educated in self-governance and project management to solve neighborhood problems, they have also taken the charge to help feed hundreds of neighborhood children and families! When they first decided to become Host Neighbors because of love for the school, they did not expect to coordinate the monthly food pantry located there.

Assuming responsibility and acting to save

"We just sort of inherited it," states Thomas when asked how they ended up running the Feeding America Food Pantry Truck at Dickinson Academy. "As things went along and the principal could not do it anymore, we ended up being in charge of it" added Thomas who along with Robin serves on the Seeds Education Impact Team. When asked about how she feels about taking on the project as two retirees supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) grant for their community governance program, Robin quickly responds "We love it!"

"I love doing it because there's a need and people really appreciate that we are helping," adds Robin. She and Thomas manage the logistics of the food delivery, monthly set-up, outreach to residents and coordinating the system for families and children to receive free boxes of fruit and vegetables on the third Thursday of each month at 4:00 p.m. at the school.

Feeding America recognized the Walkers' new project management skills and was confident that they could manage this task. "We basically took over when the school could not do everything. They (Feeding America) asked us," states Thomas. They credit many of the 12 Host Neighbor Community Governance Training Sessions—particularly Problem Solving, Six Criteria for Decision-Making and Governance—for helping them manage the monthly task of serving an average of 70 residents each month. "You guys told us that we need a process, guidelines and order. We learned that simple governance guidelines of managing the lines and the role of children in the food lines were important," Robin and Thomas agree in their observation.

The grant supports their training, project budget, equipment purchases, and stipends for their planning and activity time as volunteers. What they did not need to be trained for is their passion to keep the pantry alive.



Passion and projects

The Walkers worked with Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS), Seeds Executive Director Ron Jimmerson, and Eric Foster as Community Governance Coach/Project Manager when the pantry almost faced being moved from the school. Robin and Thomas moved quickly to make sure that would not happen. "They helped our fight to help it continue because Feeding America would not support us if it was not at the school," Robin says. They spent hours of their time with GRPS and Seeds to keep it at the school because "the people have the need and we needed to fight...that's why we kept fighting and coming back to Ron and GRPS" she adds.

Impact for neighborhood children and families

Courage, collaboration and connecting their training have made great impact. Working with corporations, coaches and fellow Host Neighbors the Walkers are addressing neighborhood hunger. Last month at the Host Neighbor Community Governance Leadership Council, the Walkers proudly reported to the Host Neighbors that 69 families and children were served in May, slightly more in June and 101 in July. They are not stopping there even though serving more families "has been building up" according to Thomas.

In 2012 the Walkers' Host Neighbor Project was the Seeds Encouragement by Neighbors of Dickinson Students (SENDS) Program to encourage student performance at Dickinson Academy through activities, gifts and recognition of their achievements. They share a focus on the school along with Host Neighbor Kalif Akbar who runs the Booker T. Washington Academy Project and Carter G. Woodson Scholar Reading Program at Dickinson.

One would think that the Walkers have enough to do. "We are doing an engagement project for the new expanded areas in Seeds along Burton Street with Garfield Park to inform them about Seeds and its services," reports Robin. The residents of the Seeds Zone (Hall, Jefferson, Burton and Eastern) are glad that Robin and Thomas are not done with their passion for the neighborhood.

Check out exciting updates from Seeds impact teams

Seeds of Promise Impact Teams are Host Neighbor resident leaders and organization partners addressing large scale problems in the neighborhood such as health, housing and education. Here are some updates on what they have been accomplishing and working on for the area.

Host Neighbor Community Leadership Council:

Host Neighbor resident volunteer leaders have completed governance trainings and have directed their own community improvement projects and activity budgets such as running the Dickinson Academy food truck serving 80 to 90 residents each month, the 200 attendee Dickinson Academy Back-to-school event and Seeds Resource Fair on August 14th, the Paris 1800 Block Unity and Resource Block Party, signing up qualified homeowners for federal fund assistance for grants and renovation, "boots-on-the ground" block assessments and providing residents with over 200 gift/resource bags and other self-directed activities. On January 13, 2014, they held elections for leadership positions of the council that determines projects, partnerships and other resident issues.

All Host Neighbors—Kalif Akbar, Paul Arrington, Valencia Cooper, Taffy Dickerson, Sarah Dehoff, Darren Eckford-El, Lamont Jamison, Pat Jimmerson-King, Pattie Mallet, Sonya Miller, Monica Moody, Robert Muhammad, Yveta Muhammad, Joy Pickens, Ann Marie Rivera, Lee Gail Tovar, Robin Walker, Thomas Walker, Ludie Weddle and Floyd Willis

Health, Wellness and Nutrition: Completed winter 2013 engagement activities with the residents to determine their needs and desires for improved local healthcare exclusively for the Seeds Area (Hall, Jefferson, Burton and Eastern). As a result, those ideas led to the development of the \$195,000 grant from Mercy Health where the hospital and Grand Valley State University's Kirchoff College of Nursing will provide holistic care for individuals, families and the community through nursing students. Other goals to improve health in the Seeds and Browing-Claytor Clinic Area such as access to primary care, immunizations and preventive health screenings will be overseen by Seeds of Promise and impact team partners.

Host Neighbors: Paul Arrington, Robert Muhammad, Yreva Muhammad and Ludie Weddle.

Endorsing Partners: Cherry Street Health Services, Kirkhof College of Nursing Program/Doctor of Nursing Practice at Grand Valley State University and Mercy Health.

Housing and Community Improvement:

Host Neighbors have been assisting eligible residents by interviewing, meeting and registering homeowners for potential assistance in housing down payments, mortgage financing and funding for home modifications and renovations. Since May, Seeds has been the site for residents gaining information and completing enrollment forms.

Host Neighbors: Pattie Mallett and Floyd Willis

Endorsing Partners: Home Repair Services, Healthy Homes Coalition, Fifth Third Bank, Garfield Park Neighborhood Association, Inner City Christian Federation, Northpointe Bank and West Michigan Environmental Action Council

Job Creation: This team is responding to resident needs for Seeds job placements similar to 2012, and they are nearing completion of the improvements in that program. They are looking forward to launching the test pilot by 2015 and will begin a test pilot program with four local employers who pledged to participate and place Seeds residents in available jobs.

Host Neighbors: Valencia Cooper, Taffy Dickerson, Daren Eckford and Pattie Mallett.

Endorsing Partners: Cascade Consulting Group, Grand Rapids Community College, Helping Build Community, Job Corps Center, Kent County Department of Human Services, Literacy Center of West Michigan, Otterbase, Partnerships to Work, West Michigan (AIME) and West Michigan Team.

Become a leader and take control of your neighborhood!

Through support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, residents in the Seeds Area Neighborhood (Hall, Jefferson, Burton and Eastern) receive financial support resources to solve their own neighborhood problems and run the Seeds of Promise organization.

You are a leader. If you are interested in joining others in the Host Neighbor Program, contact Seeds of Promise at 616-710-5730 or all4seeds@gmail.com

Seeds of Success

Education: This team has started the Dickinson Academy LOOP Program providing afterschool activities for students at the school. Those programs are coordinated by Seeds and endorsing partners. They include mentoring, tutoring, karate and tennis. The programs have already started at the school and are coordinated by Jesus Solis, Program Coordinator/Director. The programs of academic support, enjoyable activities and other services give a great offering to students for their safety and academic improvement.

Host Neighbors: Kalif Akbar, Sarah Dehoff, Joy Pickens, Lee Gail Tovar, Robin Walker and Thomas Walker.

Endorsing partners: Boy Scouts Campfire USA, City Hope Church, Cross Court Tennis, Department of Human Services, Fair Housing Center of West Michigan, Grand Valley State University, Girl Scouts, Help Build Community, Kent Schools Services Network, Kids Game,

Literacy Center of West Michigan, Madison Square Church, Mind Boggle, School to Career Progression, S.L.D Center, True Success, Vocal Music Workshop and West Michigan American Independent Marketing and Education

Social Entrepreneurial: The very successful \$25,000 Seeds Entrepreneurial and Education Development Series continues to finish up! In addition to the financial education part of this program providing funded classes, food, expert coaches and activities, the business competition that was led by Host Neighbors, Fifth Third Bank and Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women put money in the hands of neighborhood entrepreneurs with a plan and dream. The Host Neighbor and endorsing partners served as interviewers and judges awarding various \$10,000 investment awards. Recipients of those investment awards—from the neighborhood—include Centralian Shop, Daddy Pete's BBQ and Trilogy Agriculture Group.

Host Neighbors: Taffy Dickerson and Pattie Mallett.

Endorsing Partners: Fifth Third Bank, Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women and Inner City Christian Federation.

Safe Community: The newly reorganized team has recently completed the confirmation of its five mission goals and five strategies to make the Dickinson and Southtown neighborhoods safe for residents by focusing on partnerships, communication and activities to prevent crime.

Host Neighbors: Bobbie Trotter, Joy Pickens, Pat Jimmerson-King, Ann Marie Rivera and Lee Gail Tovar

Endorsing Partners: GRPD, AIME, Garfield Park, GVSU and World Ministries

Ministerial Impact Team: This new team of faith leaders formed to provide resident—church related activities that encourage the spiritual, social, psychological, and economic and health well-being of the neighborhood.

Endorsing Partners: Frank Moore World Ministries, United Prayer Coalition, Eighth Street Avenue Reformed, St Luke A.M.E Zion Church, Alpha Omega Ministries, New Life COGIC, Pure Heart Ministries and True Light Baptist Church.

Social Impact Spotlight

Seeds Education & Entrepreneurial Developmental Series

A program led by residents and experts

In 2012 Fifth Third Bank came to the Host Neighbors with an idea for a project that would fund financial literacy sessions for residents. Based on the Seeds model of resident leadership the bank had to present the idea to the Host Neighbors who would then debate, discuss and vote to approve or disapprove of the proposal.

Resident approval and accountability

While the then-17 Host Neighbors appreciated the bank's proposal, they had one big addition. Through knowledge of fellow resident needs the Host Neighbors knew that neighborhood business owners wanted investment help. Therefore, they requested that the proposal include a neighborhood business competition with monetary awards to winners.

Fifth Third Bank agreed and the grant was written which started resident-partner collaboration, resident management of the project, promotion of financial literacy and awards of \$10,000 investments to neighborhood entrepreneurs. The success of the business competition part of the Seeds Educational and Entrepreneurial Development Series was reported on television and newspaper in

Social Impact Spotlight



Patrick Lonergan of Fifth Third Bank with SEEDS Business Competition winners Cory and Tarra Davis of Daddy Pete's BBQ

recognition of its different approach to economic empowerment created by residents.

It is an approach valued and appreciated by Patrick Lonergan, Senior Vice President, Community and Economic Development at Fifth Third Bank. He appreciated how quickly and effectively the Host Neighbors, Inner City Christian Federation (ICCF) and Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women (GROW) came together for a resident-based program that educated and invested in residents. "I have enjoyed the in the trenches' work with the host neighbors and other impact team members on executing the grant and really appreciated the honesty we had working with each other. I learned a lot about a lot of things and that is always enjoyable!" exclaims Lonergan.

Classes in session and business begins

Neighborhood residents participated in classes such as Credit & Debt Reduction for two months. The grant supported the training services of ICCF as well as dinner for class participants and child care. They took part in other sessions to learn more ways to protect their finances in long-term budget planning. In addition, each person who completed the classes generated \$50 towards a neighborhood project and weighed in on how it would be used.

There would be bigger resident decisions to come through the business competition. A team of Host Neighbors, Fifth Third Bank and GROW managed the business competition pitch events that narrowed the neighborhood contestants to four. The contestants were judged on their business plans, business concept, ability to meet a market need for customers, and ability for the business to make money.

They also made their 'business pitch' at two neighborhood events where a team of Host Neighbors and Endorsing Partners judged and voted on the winners from the neighborhood. The following neighborhood entrepreneurs were selected:

- Centralian Shop was awarded \$3,600 as a business that

specializes in decorative apparel and accessories, uniforms and screen printing and embroidery and promotional products. As the owner noted in a Grand Rapids Press article on November 14, 2013, the investment award has allowed the company to purchase essential office space. The grand opening was July 9, 2014 in the heart of the Madison Street Corridor in the Seeds of Promise Zone.

- Cory and Tarra Davis of Daddy Pete's BBQ, a mobile food service, was awarded \$2,000 helping pay for expansion and more equipment. The award has greatly assisted their business and notoriety because after the competition they were invited by LINC Revitalization to participate in a BBQ Contest. They won a first place investment award of \$1,500 at LINC's 'Rock-the-block' event on Saturday, June 14, 2014.
- Reuben and Yvette Roberts of Trilogy Agriculture Group (TAG) received \$2,000 to enhance their agri-business specializing in seed stock and herd (its two divisions of grass-fed beef and organic pork). The funds will allow this family-owned operation to expand its operations and purchase a Hoop House for year-round gardening for livestock feeding and other core business functions.

Tarra Davis acknowledges the benefits that the competition and investment have provided to the business. "We were able to procure a large piece of equipment that was needed for the business. As a result, we were able to get to market just in time for the 2014 BBQ season. Since winning the award investment we have been on a whirlwind tour of the Grand Rapids area," states Ms. Davis.

Mr. Davis reports that "as soon as people knew we existed, a significant amount of requests for us to participate in community events, fairs, and festivals came to us. We were a regular vendor for Movies in the Park, and Mary Free Bed has brought us on to be one of their food truck vendors while their cafeteria is being renovated. We were a vendor for the 28th Street Metro Cruise, won first place for best side dish at the Grand Haven Rib Fest and participated in the Berlin Raceway Rib Stock in early September!" Along with the other participants they also credited the business competition helping them present a business pitch in a clear and professional manner and promote their business to the Grand Rapids area.

More gains and goals to meet

Mr. Lonergan and the Host Neighbor team look to improve some unmet goals of the financial education program and support new entrepreneurs through the business competition.

"It is vitally important that we nurture the spirit of entrepreneurship in everyone and everywhere. Honestly we have not met our goals in the financial education track but it was not for lack of trying. The business pitch competition did meet our goals. Starting from scratch the Impact Team created and executed something that had never been done in the Seeds neighborhood before," he states.

For more information about Daddy Pete's please visit www.daddypetesbbq.com.

New space and place!

As Seeds expands in our zone of Hall, Jefferson, Burton and Eastern we are also in a new location at 1168 Madison, SE!



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Permit #66

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Events

Those interested in being Host Neighbors and others in the public are welcome to visit these meetings during October, November and December 2014

October Events

October 10th - Housing Impact Team
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

October 15th - Host Neighbor Leadership Council Meeting - 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

October 18th - 2014 Revival Quest March & Rally
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
March Begins @ 9:00 AM Martin Luther King Park to G.R. Ford Academy Grounds

October 22nd - 2014 Health Impact Team
5:30 PM - 6:30 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

November Events

November 5th - Job and Wealth Impact Team
4:30 PM - 5:30 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

November 6th - Board Meeting Impact Team
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

November 7th - Educational Impact
10:30 AM - 11:30 AM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

November 14th - Housing Impact Team Impact
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

November 19th - Host Neighbor Leadership Council
5:00 PM - 6:00 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

November 20th - Advisory Board
10:30 AM - 11:30 AM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

November 20th - Ministerial Impact Team
(Time to be determined)
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

November 21st - Safe Community
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

November 22nd - Boots on the Ground Training
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

December Events

December 1st - Entrepreneurial Impact Team
3:30 PM - 4:30 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

December 3rd - Job Creation Impact Team
4:30 PM - 5:30 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

December 4th - Board Meeting
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

December 5th - Educational Impact Team
10:30 AM - 11:30 AM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

December 12th - Housing Impact Team
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

December 15th - Entrepreneurial Impact Team
3:30 PM - 4:30 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

December 17th - Host Neighbor Leadership Council Meeting - 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

December 18th - Ministerial Impact Meeting
(Time to be determined)
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

December 19th - Safe Community Meeting
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507

December 30th - Entrepreneurial Impact Team
3:30 PM - 4:30 PM
1168 Madison Ave Grand Rapids MI 49507