Girl Power Receives National Service Award

By: Alyssa Kenney
On Monday, January 15th
Kennedy Heights Girl Neighborhood Power program received the Presidential Community Service Award for completing over 400 hours of community service during 2006. The award was presented during Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Service Day. Mayor Dave Cieslewicz presented the awards to individual youth in the community who had completed over one-hundred hours and youth groups who completed at least 250 hours over the course of the year.

In 2006, the Kennedy Heights Girl Neighborhood Power group participated in monthly service projects which have included Kettle Collection and Bell Ringing for the Salvation Army; face painting for the participants in the Fit City Kids’ Fun Run; working with the Weed Warriors at Edna Taylor Park during youth service day; and volunteering at the Atwood Summerfest. The Girl Power participants have also initiated their own youth planned projects throughout the year. Some girl initiated projects have included raising awareness about Darfur, participating in United Way’s Day of Caring and taking a leadership role in the county wide food drive “Trick or Treat so Others Can Eat”.

Instead of taking a day off, the Kennedy Heights Girl Power girls joined 400 other youth from throughout Dane County and participated in the Urban League of Greater Madison’s Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Service Day. During the morning the girls participated in educational workshops, enjoyed youth performances, and a keynote address from gang prevention expert Jack Holliday. The girls joined in a youth march to the capitol at noon and then spent the afternoon starting their 500 hours of community service for 2007.

Join the Board

By Lynne Solomon
The Board of Directors of the Kennedy Heights Community Center is off to a great year. After the annual meeting of the Center in October, two more residents of Kennedy Heights joined the Board as new members. We welcome Lacy Vosen as a Board Member and Monair McCain as a Youth Advisory Board Member. We are always looking for people to join the Board—especially residents of Kennedy Heights. The application process is very easy and being on the Board is a great experience. We meet the third Wednesday of each month from 5:30pm to 7:00pm at the Community Center. Childcare is available during our meetings. As a Board, we talk and make decisions about many things, including policies affecting the Center, the budget, and what programs are offered to the community. One of our next projects will be starting a committee to plan this year’s community festival. If you want more information on how to join the Board or you are interested in helping to plan this year’s festival, you can ask Alyssa at the Center. If you might be interested in joining the Board or just want to check out what we are talking about, come to a Board meeting. All Board meetings are open to the public and we welcome.

Girls in attendance included Kia Thao, Malinda Hongmani-vanh, Kadee Thao, Chue Vang, Hailey Brill, Monique Howard, Tchia Thao, Lila Ly, Shawngura Gibbs and Serina Overland. Program coordinator Emily Seinkiewicz and Kennedy Heights AmeriCorps member Elisa Walker joined the Girl Power participants. The theme of this year’s Martin Luther King Jr. celebration was, “The time is always right, to do what is right.”
Greeting from the Executive Director

By: Alyssa Kenney

Resolutions:
Each year I make plenty of New Year’s resolutions; be a better friend, live a more balanced life, eat more green vegetable, floss everyday, etc. I wanted to share one with the community. This year I resolve to spend my money at local businesses and make every effort to patronize the businesses that support the things I care about. Please support the businesses that support Kennedy Heights, their contributions and the gifts of many generous individuals are critical to our success.

Our Website
When I was explaining community center programs to visitors I often mention our Asian Outreach program and the huge variety of things that VanMeej assists residents with. I often mention that sometimes new refugees receive mail soliciting business that appears to be a bill or a check; cashing the check or sending in a payment often activates some type of contract. Helping non-English speakers learn about these solicitations has been a part of the program. It is with some embarrassment that I must admit I recently fell for one of these scams. I paid a bill that I though was a renewal for the Kennedy Heights website. A few months later when the real bill arrived, I quickly assumed it was a solicitation and ignored it. This resulted in our website expiring and another company purchased our website address. I was duped. Luckily, with the help of a tech-savvy volunteer Kennedy Heights was able to get our same website at a new address. You can now find our website at: www.khcommunitycenter.org

Important Gifts
In December, the community center food pantry received an important visit from 5 year old Leo Dreis. In lieu of birthday presents Leo collected food for the food pantry and donated some of his toys for our Early Childhood program. Leo and his family came to visit the pantry and deliver the food. The food helped fill our shelves. Leo thank you for your important gift.

After School Program Prepared for Spring

By: True Vang
I can’t believe it is already 2007 and soon it will be spring. The children have been really excited to finally have some snow. So they have been spending time outside sledding, making snowmen and snow angels. After School has many enriching things planned for spring. The science club will return on Mondays to the 2nd and 3rd grade classroom. Andy Paulino from the Department of Natural Resources will come and do a workshop on birds in Wisconsin. And Troy McIntyre, a fire fighter and parent will come and do a fire safety demonstration and talk about what fire fighters do.

This spring the program will go on some field trips out in the community, parents are always welcome and often needed to help chaperone these trips.

There are a few openings for Kindergarten—3rd grade students in the After School program, so if you are interested in having your child start the program you can come by and pick up an enrollment packet in the community center office or call me, True at the center 244-0767.

Field Trips of the Future!

By: Jody Schmitz
Since the beginning of the year, the Women’s Group has taken two local field trips within the city. In January, the group went to the UW Human Ecology department for an exhibition of the knitting work of Elizabeth Zimmerman, who was a pioneer of modern-day knitting. A second January trip was to the Wisconsin State Historical Society Museum on the Square where we viewed a number of exhibits including the history of toys.

The plan for this year is to try to do a trip each month around the city of Madison.

Do you have any ideas for local trips that you’d like to take? Let Jody Schmitz know of any suggestions you have. We usually take trips on the weekend.

Other Women’s Group programs include knitting on the second and fourth Friday evenings each month from 6 to 8 PM. Beginners are welcome since we have several experienced knitters to teach them. Limited supplies are available.
News From the Heights

4th and 5th Grade Program takes on new Challenges!

By: Elisa Walker
The New Year is finally here and with it came some positive changes for the After-School Program classroom that houses fourth and fifth grade students. More specifically, we have developed a wonderful program that provides a perfect combination of education and fun. The children are given ample time to use the computers, play games and go outside. However, they are also given time for their homework and each day they answer a Question of the Day. This question is typically educational in nature and takes the children approximately fifteen minutes to complete. It can be anything from a crossword puzzle to reading passage. While some children initially resisted it and left early to go home, the youth have now grown to expect it and look forward to it! They have managed to exceed my expectations in their subject knowledge and I have even had to make the questions harder and harder. Overall, it has been a great start to the New Year. All the parents of the fourth and fifth grade students who attend the after-school program should be very proud of their children!

By: Emily Sienkiewicz
On the last Sunday in January, Celebrating Youth! Hoopla Circus, an event organized by the Wisconsin Youth Company, was held at the Monona Terrace and marked a day filled with performances and activities for the youth of Madison. Amongst the many entertainers, thirteen girls from the West Side and Kennedy Heights Community Center Girl Neighborhood Power programs performed an original dance entitled Project Beautiful! Funded by a By Youth For Youth Grant written by former Kennedy Heights GNP participants, Project Beautiful! celebrates the diversity of the city of Madison through the art of dance.

For the past three months, the West Side and Kennedy Heights GNP sites joined together to learn about different cultures and traditions in the community through the dances of those cultures. Under the instruction of Tai Words, the West Side GNP coordinator and a talented dancer, these dedicated girls learned about the history of Ballet, Hip-Hop, and Modern dance. These dancers then choreographed and practiced each style and created a final piece that combines all three dances together. This joint project proved that girls can be positive, work together, and create something beautiful even though they represent different cultures and backgrounds. The girls were exposed to the many traditions and customs in the world of dance as well as in their own lives and forged friendships across cultures as they worked and danced together.

From the West Side GNP, the dancers include Shemekia Graham, Tekela Harper, Jamilia Cooper, Aurealia Johnson, Tatiana Anderson, Caprice Alexander, and Gevonna Green. From the Kennedy Heights Girl Neighborhood Power, the dancers include Serina Overland, Tchia Thao, Moneisha Dorsey, Nakia Gulley, Christina Yang, and Shawngura Gibbs.

For the final performance, Project Beautiful! united the different styles and traditions of dance in order to share the uniqueness of each culture to the community of Madison and, specifically, its youth.

Project Beautiful participants pose for the camera after their performance
Energy Fairs

The Community Energy Resource Fairs will be returning to the Northside again this year. Individuals who would like to set up a payment plan with MG & E, lower their monthly bills or would like to apply onsite for energy assistance are strongly encourage to attend. MGE and Energy Services, Inc. will be onsite for appointments and to help people access community resources. Their will be free workshops throughout the fair to help individuals lower their bills.

Childcare, transportation and translation can be provided but you must RSVP to 267-8601 to let the Fair coordinator know what service you need.

There will be two fairs on the Northside:
Date: Saturday, March 6th
Time: 1:30 PM—4:30
Location: Northport Community Learning Center (1740 Northport Drive)

Date: Tuesday, March 20th
Time: 6:30—8:30 PM
Location: Mendota Elementary School (4002 School Rd)

For more information please call Annette Miller at MGE 252-7126.

Free Tax Help

Would you like FREE help filing your tax return? The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program can help. Free tax help is available for low-income, elderly and/or disabled people throughout the city of Madison.

Drop-in Location
Location: Financial Education Center; 2300 South Park St.
When: January 24th—April 16th Monday and Wednesday 12—6:00 PM Saturday 9:00 AM—6:00 PM

By Appointment 246-4547
Location: Lakeview Library 2845 North Sherman
When: February 2nd—March 29th Thursdays 1:30 PM—4:30 PM

What to bring: A complete copy of last’s years tax returns, all 2006 informational statements, information regarding other income, information regarding all other deductions/credits, copies of social security cards for all family members, documents relating to homestead credit including a rent certificate or property tax bill and a record of W2 payments, and a record of any estimated tax payments made for 2006.