



NEWS YOU CAN USE

Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc.

March 2008

Free Annual Chili Supper - Come Enjoy the Fun!

By Sarah Bates

Our family has attended the NNN Annual Chili Supper the last 2 years. We have been delighted with the friendly, fun, casual gathering of friends and neighbors. Each year we have met many new neighbors and have enjoyed the relaxed conversations that happen over delicious bowls of chili. In the winter it is hard to get out and connect with neighbors, let alone meet new neighbors. The Chili Supper is the perfect atmosphere to do both.

The obvious advantage of the Chili Supper is the wonderful free food! How can anybody say "no" to a hot bowl of chili, delicious corn bread and enormous piles of homemade desserts? Many neighbors work hard to contribute the best of their cooking to bring you all homemade, tasty food. Our first year at the Chili Supper, I was surprised to see the competitive nature of the "chili chefs". Each "chili chef" creates his best pot of chili and gloats over it hoping that perhaps his pot of chili will be the most favored and therefore the first to disappear. The chilies have ranged from buffalo cactus chili, to veggie chili, to white chocolate chili and of course good old fashioned chili.

Come enjoy the fun and vote for your favorite chili! The Chili Supper will be **March 18th from 5:30 - 7:00 pm** at the Charles Martin Youth Center. We'll hope to see you there!

Neighbors Talk with the New Chief of Police

In late February the Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc. (NNN) was very fortunate to host a "Meet the Chief" to introduce neighbors to the South Bend Police Department's newly appointed Chief of Police, Darryl Boykins. Chief Boykins is already familiar with our organization and the neighborhood due to his involvement on the NNN's Board of Directors and his assistance in formulating the community oriented policing program that was launched in the neighborhood last summer. Additionally, Chief Boykins runs a boxing program for neighborhood youth at the Grace Community Center on Harrison Street. So even prior to taking on his new position, the Chief clearly understood the challenges faced in urban neighborhoods, but more importantly, he has been willing to roll up his sleeves to attempt to change things.

At the meeting Chief Boykin shared his vision for the department and some of his upcoming priorities with neighbors, which include:

- Additional training for officers.
- Diversity in the department. Along with strong recruiting, especially of minorities, in response to a generational transition on the force.
- Knowing residents, requiring officers to get out in neighborhoods on bicycle and foot patrols.
- Buy in from all the SBPD to understand everyone is not a criminal. Changing the culture of the department to create more professionalism and respect.

During the meeting a neighbor asked a very important question, "How can we help you?" Without hesitation the Chief began to explain that there are many ways residents can help, in particular they need to be another set of eyes and ears which alert police when things are going on in the neighborhood. The key to this discussion was how vitally important communication is between neighbors and the police. With the demands put on officers' time, the only way they can know what is going on in a given area is if residents call when they see suspicious behavior. The Chief also stressed the importance of community involvement with our young adults through churches, schools, and daycares. I think everyone who attended the meeting left energized after getting to know our new partner in the police department, having a better understanding of his dedication to make a difference to solve community problems.

Want to be involved with Adopt-a-Block?!

Consider being a Block Captain! The NNN wants to adopt as many blocks (streets and alleys) as possible, but each block needs a "captain." That is a neighbor who takes the responsibility of planning the dates for the clean-ups and notifying their neighbors so that they can help out. Being a captain does not take a lot of time, but the result is that you will have a cleaner neighborhood! If you would like to learn more, please contact the NNN at 232-9182.

YEAR-AT-A-GLANCE

Annual NNN Chili Supper

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

5:30 - 7:00 pm

Charles Martin Youth Center

(Corner of Cushing & Lincoln Way)

Tax Preparation

Tuesday, March 18, 2008

2:00 - 4:00 pm

NNN Offices

Community Forum Report Back Session

Tuesday, March 25, 2008

7:00 pm

NNN Offices

Code Enforcement General Meeting - Special Guest Catherine Toppel, Director of Code Enforcement

Saturday, April 5, 2008

10:00 - 11:00 am

NNN Offices

Adopt-a-Block Kick-off

Saturday, April 19, 2008

8:00 am

NNN Offices

MONTHLY NNN MEETINGS

Safety Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 3, 2008

6:00 pm

NNN Offices

Environmental Committee Meeting

Tuesday, April 22, 2008

6:00 pm

NNN Offices

THINGS AROUND TOWN

The Arabian Nights

April 18-20, 23-27

8:00 pm (Sundays, 3:00 pm)

South Bend Civic Theatre

Spring Art Walk

May 3, 2008

11:00 am - 5:00 pm

Downtown South Bend

QUESTIONS? Call us at 232-9182

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Adopt-a-Block

By Jeff Nixa

Jimmy was one of those neighbors I occasionally saw but rarely talked to. He was a big guy, and always wore a plaid XXXL shirt open at the belly. Jimmy lived across the alley, behind a battered chain link fence that didn't keep his dogs or blowing trash inside very well. His boys would sneak out and play in the alley until he'd yell at them. Jimmy was always yelling at something: the dogs, the kids, his life. He seemed angry, and scary, and his wife never came outside.

I had tried a couple times to talk to Jimmy about the trash but the conversations were short. I began to see that Jimmy was struggling to just hang on. His family was isolated, like they were defending the last little piece of property they could rent on this earth. He was shy too: despite his stature, he didn't make eye contact. He had a quiet voice and a small boy's spirit. I stopped being afraid of Jimmy and invited him and his kids to help with the annual NNN Adopt a Block cleanup day.

I'd learned from past years that many of the people on our street would "forget" the big day. Or be "over at their cousin's." Or writing a graduate school thesis. Or sleeping in late (like, 3pm). And so on. So I made a little poster and walked door-to-door. "Free Pizza at Jeff and Regina's House after the Trash Pickup. Kids Welcome!" I rang doorbells, talked to neighbors, asked them to write the date down. To *not* stay out late the night before. To *not* be over at their cousins. To be *here*: to be good neighbors. Some people seemed surprised anyone was even asking, as if it hadn't occurred to them to consider the outside of their property, or to interact with neighbors. Nice people with kids but who never came out of the house, except to go to work, or church, or the store. Almost like people were hiding, in their own ways, from our very neighborhood.

My girls invited the aimless kids on our street too, and next thing I knew other kids were coming by from one, two, even three blocks away. "You Aimee dad?" they'd say, arms crossed. "You gimme pizza too?" I shrugged. "You help, you get pizza." They grinned and ran off. The evening before Adopt A Block Saturday, I made one last walkabout to remind neighbors. But Jimmy, his kids and even the dogs were gone. Maybe they had moved, maybe they were at their cousin's. Oh well. We tried.

The next morning, neighbors gathered as expected on our front porch for the big day. What I didn't expect was to see Jimmy and all three of his boys, standing back in the alley with a broken rake and an old broom, waiting to help. "Hey Jimmy!" I shouted. "Come join us for the kickoff down at NNN! Coffee, juice and donuts!" He just shook his head, and held his boys back. But when we returned from the joyful NNN kickoff with all the leather work gloves and garbage bags you'd ever need, Jimmy was already hard at work in the alley with his boys. They hauled out rain-filled tires, rotting carpets, bricks, a mangled stroller, decomposing kitchen bags of meat and diapers. We made small trash piles together up and down the alley, then tossed them into the back of a neighbor's pickup. Jimmy worked hard as anyone, always keeping a distance from the others. Even his wife had come outside and was carefully picking up their own back yard. It was the most neighborly day I'd ever seen on Cottage Grove: people out, kids out, NNN staff cruising around with bottled water and supplies, Code Enforcement officers in the weeds with the rest of us, roving police keeping an eye on the properties, a television crew doing sidewalk interviews.

At one point, some other guys and I were trying to lift a section of dilapidated stockade fence with junk piled on it: bricks, old pipes, storm windows. We wanted to drag the whole thing up into the truck bed where I was standing. This was a dumb idea: rusted nails stuck out of the fence pickets and as we lifted it the wood frame began to crack under the weight. But my legs were wedged in the brush of the truck bed and two of us were about to get "nailed" by the collapsing fence.

Just then, Jimmy appeared out of nowhere. He threw his big head and shoulders down under the splitting fence, heaved upwards and must have taken several nails right in the back. "Ok," he said loud and clear. "You guys get out of the truck." We hopped down thankfully, and when we were clear, Jimmy gave two mighty shoves and the entire thing was up into the truck bed. Before we could thank him, Jimmy was back down the alley with his boys, and within hours the alley was as tidy as the day it was born.

The pizza? Jimmy let the boys come over after the day's hard work. And as we ate and talked with neighbors we'd only driven past before, I saw three skinny boys eat so much sausage, cheese and pepperoni I thought they'd burst. Other kids ran and splashed on a waterslide, phone numbers and e-mails were exchanged, hands were shaken. It was a blessed day for all, on Cottage Grove Avenue, in the Near Northwest Neighborhood.

So mark your calendars and join us for the **Adopt-a-Block Kick-off on Saturday, April 19th at 8 am at the NNN Offices!**

FREE Tax Assistance

Since the early 1970's the University of Notre Dame has helped thousands of Indiana residents prepare their federal and state income tax returns. They are able to offer these services free of charge because students, faculty, and staff members from the University volunteer their time and expertise to help keep this program running.

Families with an annual income of \$38,000 or less are invited to have their taxes prepared by accounting students from the University of Notre Dame.

**This assistance will be available at the NNN offices on
Tuesday, March 18, 2-4pm**

There is no reservation required and the assistance is FREE of charge.

Your Voice Builds *Our* Community Community Forum Report Back Session

The NNN and the Indiana Association for Community Economic Development (IACED) would like to invite residents to attend the

Community Forum Report Back Session on Tuesday, March 25th at 7pm.

Plan on attending so you can learn more about the four housing priority areas (listed below) identified by residents in the forums and some of the opportunities to address these issues as they relate to the NNN's Five Year Housing Strategy.

- Reinvestment and rehabilitation of existing homes
- Property taxes
- Vacant and abandoned properties
- Teaching home maintenance and repair

Neighborhood Yoga

FREE 7-Week Session for
Beginners

Starting Monday, March 17th
Classes will be held Mondays

4:00 pm Sharp to 5:15 pm

At the NNN Office

(1005 Portage)

Limited space available.

If interested please register by
contacting Ann Clark:

At aclark@saintmarys.edu or

Via mail at 831 Forest Ave

South Bend, IN 46616

Ann is certified
by the RYT Yoga
Alliance

