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Houston LISC: AmeriCorps

As members celebrated the 2nd Annual AmeriCorps Week from May 11-18, the Houston LISC AmeriCorps program has received \$76,000 to support an additional 19 full and part time members in 2008-2009.

The Houston LISC AmeriCorps Program has placed 57 motivated volunteers in service opportunities with 11 community organizations facilitating affordable housing and assisting civic engagement of local residents throughout the city.

On May 15, 2008, the AmeriCorps Week celebration took place at Texas Southern University's Museum, where AmeriCorps members were honored for their hard work and success achieved during the past service year. Council Member Jarvis Johnson, a former AmeriCorps member, spoke at the event.

Solution Makers: Pathways Out of Poverty Program

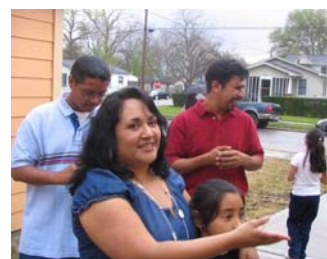
On May 20, 2008 at the United Way Community Resource Center, Benita Melton, Grant Officer of the Mott Foundation, discussed with community stakeholders her work in family economic security including Pathways Out of Poverty program. This asset building project worked with families with limited resources to build assets to create brighter future.

During the program co-hosted by LISC, Rockwell Fund and the United Way of Greater Houston, Melton and program participants shared a critical conversation that considered individual and collective opportunities and challenges in creating Houston's solution to unique pathways out of poverty. Citi Foundation and the Alliance for Nonprofit Management was the generous underwriter for this event.

Highlighting Homeownership Avenue CDC



March 10, 2008 Avenue CDC celebrated with an open-house and ribbon cutting ceremony to welcome a family moving into their new home developed by the CDC in Houston's Near Northside.



The Community Builder

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Welcome to Houston LISC's Newsletter

Welcome! to the first issue of The Community Builder, Houston LISC's semi-annual newsletter. We plan to keep in touch with funders, partners, friends and other practitioners working in community development about our initiatives and investments to build a stronger community in Houston.

As a local program office of a

national organization, our mission is to assist community development organizations transform distressed neighborhoods into healthy, sustainable communities.

We help our neighbors envision and build communities where people are proud to live, do business, work and raise families.

By providing capital, technical expertise, training and informa-

tion, LISC supports the development of local leadership and the creation of affordable and green housing, commercial and community facilities, public charter schools, businesses and jobs.

In our newsletter we will share stories about Houston LISC's initiatives, upcoming events and workshops, successes and issues facing our work.

Sustainable Communities

Houston LISC began the year with the rollout of the Sustainable Communities Initiative at a well attended and exciting forum held at the University of Houston in February.

LISC defines Sustainable Communities as healthy neighborhoods of choice and opportunity - places where families can live, work, and raise their children. This concept centers around a comprehensive approach to neighborhood revitalization and serves as the cornerstone for LISC's national strategic plan.

With generous sponsorship from the United Way of Greater Houston and Wells Fargo Bank, 80 participants, representing a broad range of the Houston community development sector, exchanged their experiences, successes and challenges in carrying out the mission of building sustainable communities.

Michael Rubinger, LISC's President & CEO, kicked off the February forum with an overview of the five basic objectives of LISC's Sustainable Communities Initiative:

- Expanding capital investment in affordable housing and other real estate;
- Building family income and wealth;
- Stimulating local economic activity;
- Improving residents' access to quality education;
- Developing healthy environments and lifestyles.

The forum included a panel presentation of the New Communities Program (NCP) in Chicago. NCP is LISC's flagship example of the Sustainable Communities approach. Next, representatives from the Ford Foundation and JPMorgan Chase Foundation discussed trends in comprehensive community development investment from the grantmaker's perspective. The day continued with an inspiring luncheon keynote by Anna Babin, President & CEO of the United Way of Greater Houston, about the United Way's community goal of Family Economic Security. The day concluded with an interactive discussion of next steps in implementing the Sustainable Communities agenda locally.

Houston LISC is using this forum as the launching point for implementing a Sustainable Communities Agenda in Houston. The approach will allow LISC to be more strategic with its investments in Houston by working with strong partners on signature projects as well as rolling out a pilot program in 2008. In the pilot program, LISC will select three neighborhoods for a demonstration effort. The pilot neighborhoods will participate in community engagement, neighborhood planning and strategy development activities as well as work collaboratively to implement their shared vision.



Andy Mooney, LISC Chicago Sr. Program Director speaks at the Forum

Tejano Center of Community Concerns Grand Opening

Nueva Vida's Courtyard



The Tejano Center for Community Concerns recently celebrated the ribbon-cutting for Nueva Vida, a new apartment community for seniors. Tejano Center is a nonprofit providing social, economic, educational and housing services to residents in the greater East End for the past 16 years.

The 66-unit project on Tejano's campus at 2950 Broadway offers quality affordable housing to elderly persons and couples with rents not to exceed 30% of

the household's income. As of the middle of May, there are only a few apartments remaining to be leased.

Support for the \$5 million project comes largely from a nearly \$4.6 million grant provided under the Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development.

Houston LISC has worked with Tejano Center since the CDC's

inception, providing \$512,000 in grant dollars and lending over \$423,000 for development projects.



"Nueva Vida"

New Playground Promotes Healthy Families in 3rd Ward

Ryan Middle School marching band provides a prep rally for volunteer builders



Parents, youth and community leaders are more invested in the enhanced Project Row House's (PRH) Park after designing and installing a new playground.

The new playground serves the 32 families who will reside in the Row House CDC (RHDC) duplexes. The development provides affordable housing for area residents, as well as youth and families who participate in the PRH programs.

In December 2007, over 60 volunteers, including ten LISC AmeriCorps Members, assem-

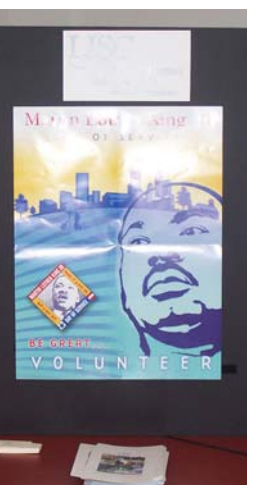
bled and installed the durable playground components. The local Ryan Middle School marching band conducted a lunch-time pep rally and kids came after school to see the final work before play began.

Thanks to the generous support of KaBOOM!, Kraft Lunchables, and the hard-work of LISC AmeriCorps Members, Third Ward Village families and PRH/RHDC supporters, the Third Ward Village now has a playground that will promote health for generations to come.



Volunteers building bridges at Project Row Houses' Dupree Park.

Houston LISC AmeriCorps Lead in the 40 Days of Nonviolence: Building the Beloved Community



On the Martin Luther King Holiday and during the 40 days that followed, LISC AmeriCorps Members led their communities in reflecting upon the principles of nonviolent action as a strategy for bringing about stronger communities. The members assisted residents in examining the structures in their communities that has led to violence and poverty by conducting community assessments and creating action plans with

civic groups. The Houston LISC Program kicked off the MLK 40 Days of Nonviolence on January 22nd by training over 50 resident leaders/volunteers on Community Organizing & Assessment. AmeriCorps members provided attendees two applied service learning opportunities to put what they learned into practice: February 14th, Minnetex Community Assessment Survey and March 13th Inwood Commu-

nity Assessment Survey.

For anyone interested in learning how to conduct a community survey or who wants to volunteer, please contact Paul Wright at pwright@lisc.org.



CapBuilders Program Wrap-Up

The Houston Area Capacity Building Program (CapBuilders) came to a close at the end of the first quarter 2008. The program began in 2004 with the goal of building the capacity of community development organizations to create greater neighborhood impact.

This was a multi-year initiative designed to provide operating support, targeted technical assistance for the organizations and their projects, along with training.

Houston Endowment, United Way of Greater Houston and the Rockwell Fund served as the major program funders.

On March 25, 2008, nine CDCs celebrated completing the program with measurable success.

Final program participants include: Acres Homes CDC, Alameda CDC, Avenue CDC, Holmes CDC, Neighborhood Recovery CDC, Row House CDC, Solid Rock CDC, Tejano Center for Community Concerns, and Woman, Inc.

Since the program's inception in 2004, the participants have developed 321 units of housing and started more than 6,300 families on the path to homeownership through homebuyer education and counseling with 900 becoming homeowners. Accomplishments include the redevelopment of 90,000 sq ft. of commercial and community space and assistance provided to over 9,100 people to improve their quality of life through various community programs.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, these organizations also provided aid to more than 7,000 evacuees.

Thanks to the investment of program resources, the CapBuilders Program participants developed stronger boards of directors, improved asset management and financial accounting systems, and strengthened their organizations' systems in fund development, human resources and real estate development.

While the CapBuilders Program is ending, LISC looks forward to continuing to provide capacity building services and resources to organizations through its other programs and initiatives.



Amanda Timm, Executive Director of Houston LISC and Paul Charles, Executive Director of Neighborhood Recovery CDC

IRS Expects More Reporting in Redesigned Form 990

With the goal to enhance transparency and standardize reporting, the Internal Revenue Service has redesigned Form 990 and is phasing in compliance over the next two years.

For the 2008 tax year, only non-profits with more than \$1 million in gross receipts and \$2.5 million in total assets are required to file the long form, agencies under this threshold file 990EZ. Agencies with less than \$25,000 in gross receipts must now file a 990N, a post card form.

Starting in 2009 the threshold for the long form decreases to \$500,000 in gross receipts and \$1.25 million in total assets. After 2009 only agencies with less than \$200,000 in revenue and \$500,000 in assets file 990EZ.

The most significant changes to Form 990 are related to the expansion from two schedules to up to 15 schedules and 37

detailed Yes/No questions, which depending on the type of question, may require that the filer complete a schedule. The IRS will no longer accept attachments.

The implications of the new 990 to non-profits will be significant as they relate to accounting for new items and governance systems.

Below are the top five issues that experts recommend non-profit agencies address in 2008 to be adequately prepared to complete the 990.

1. Educate Board and staff on the implications of the new Form 990 early and develop a committee to oversee compliance and/or implementation of new internal systems of compliance. Be prepared well in advance of the your agency's time of filing.
2. Review and/or develop conflict of interest, whistle-

blower, files retention/destruction policies and processes for decision making in order to complete the "Part VI: Governance, Management and Disclosure" section of the form.

3. Do not respond with "N/A" or "not applicable" in any of the Yes/No questions. Be prepared to answer every question and schedule that is required. Draft narrative questions in advance and have your CPA or tax preparer review the responses.

4. Review/develop a volunteer tracking system that includes both number of volunteers and hours served.

5. Finally, double check that all payroll tax calculations reported to the IRS for your fiscal year are reported the same on the 990.

Link to Form 990 online instructions: www.irs.gov/instructions/i990-ez/index.html



Link to Download Form 990: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f990.pdf