

# WUMC Neighbor News

*Community Initiatives in Forest Park Southeast*



Washington University Medical Center

Spring 2006

## Rebuilding Together a Success



Rebuilding Together home on Gibson

On Saturday May 6<sup>th</sup> you may have witnessed a massive scale project that included large dumpsters, port-a-potties and hundreds of volunteers busy on the 4300 blocks of Gibson. This venture was a partnership between Rebuilding Together and Washington University Medical Center (WUMC). Rebuilding Together, formerly Christmas in April, is a national organization that revitalizes neighborhoods in partnership with the community by rehabilitating the houses of low-income homeowners, particularly the elderly and the disabled, so that they may continue to live independently in comfort and safety. Brian Phillips, Executive Director of WUMC and former board member of Rebuilding Together, stated "Rebuilding Together does great things in the St. Louis area and we wanted to make sure that Forest Park Southeast becomes one of their targeted areas." This year in order for Forest Park Southeast to be chosen, WUMC made a significant contribution to Rebuilding Together to fund the equipment and tools necessary for the project day. Along with the contribution, Brooks Goedecker, Community Development Specialist for WUMC, assisted the residents on Gibson with the application process. "The 4300 blocks of Gibson have had some long time home owners that have held on and are committed to those blocks. We wanted to make sure that they received the necessary support to maintain their homes," Goedecker stated.

Rebuilding Together works all year to gear up for this one day. This year's volunteers in the FPSE neighborhood were from the MasterCard Company of St. Louis. Allen Rowilson, resident of Gibson and participant of Rebuilding Together, stated, "The whole day was overwhelming. I had 25 people in and around my house cleaning and repairing. They were all so pleasant and it made me realize that there are people that want to make a difference, even if that means assisting a stranger with his home." Rowilson's home received a newly landscaped front yard, patchwork for leaks, new floor tile, painted rooms, a kitchen table, a painted front porch, a vacuum cleaner, cleaning supplies, and a cleaned out basement. Rowilson was one of six homes from Gibson that participated in the day. Goedecker acknowledged, "This worked out great because we were able to target a specific area, which meant that we could have the dumpsters, the equipment, and the volunteers all in one section. This made it a lot easier in coordinating the day." WUMC hopes that they can begin to target another block(s) in Forest Park Southeast for next year.

## 22 FPSE Residents Work to Complete their GED

MERS/Goodwill Employment Services, located at the Adams Park Community Center and funded by WUMC, has placed over 65 FPSE residents in employment within the last two years. Esther Williams, MERS/Goodwill's Director of Community Projects, stated that "We are proud of the fact that we have assisted so many FPSE residents in locating safe and stable employment. We have had such great success that now employers are requesting us to send them our FPSE participants. However, some of the residents that enter through our doors are lacking a high school degree or GED. For participants to career ladder or to be hired by reputable companies, they must receive their GED."

In order to maintain the program's success and for the participants to be placed in good jobs, MERS/Goodwill and WUMC took proactive steps by adding the GED program component. Currently, there are 22 FPSE residents enrolled in the GED program. Participants attend classes 2 days a week in preparation for the GED exam. Brooks Goedecker, Community Development Specialist for WUMC stated, "The MERS/Goodwill program adheres to our goal of lifting up the whole community. We are excited by the commitment these residents have demonstrated on a weekly basis to obtain their GED and to better themselves." Participants will be talking their GED exams this summer. We wish all of them good luck with their exams and their future ventures. If you are interested in the MERS/Goodwill GED program or employment services, please contact Rayfinette Sanford at 633-7916.



WUMC installed 4 planters at the corner of Tower Grove and Manchester.

The 17th Ward Youth Employment Program maintains the plants.

## SCORES Brings Poetry, Soccer, and Fun to the FPSE Community

SCORES is a national organization that combines the sport of soccer and the skills of teamwork to build a foundation for poetry and writing within the public school system. Through the support of WUMC the St. Louis SCORES program was introduced at Adams Elementary School. St. Louis SCORES Executive Director, Serena Muhammad stated that, "Without the support of WUMC, St. Louis SCORES would not have been able to help children in the FPSE neighborhood address the critical issues of childhood obesity and low literacy levels. As our first corporate sponsor, WUMC's support gave us the credibility we needed to attract additional sponsors and expand our program throughout the area. In addition the technical assistance provided by WUMC staff was instrumental in forging key partnerships with Adams Elementary School." The SCORES program identifies and hires local school teachers to take on the role of soccer and writing coaches. The program provides soccer activities, writing workshops, and game days after-school during the fall and spring seasons. Brian Phillips, Executive Director of WUMC, acknowledged, "We are committed to youth programming in Forest Park Southeast. The St. Louis SCORES program has helped to create a sense of teamwork between the students on the field and in the classroom."



A St. Louis SCORES practice at the Joseph P. Roddy Campus

## WUMC Renews its Commitment to the Adams Park Senior Program by Pledging Funding and Support Toward Daily Programming



Weekly art class held at the Adams Park Community Center

The Adams Park Senior Program has been a long time institution in the Forest Park Southeast neighborhood. The program gives area seniors a chance to socialize, receive a free hot meal, and participate in fun and educational activities. Myisa Whitlock, the coordinator of the program for the last 4 years stated, "WUMC's commitment to the program has been outstanding. Seniors want a chance to come out of their homes and participate in enjoyable activities and WUMC understands that." Saint Louis Area Agency on Aging provides the daily lunch for the program and the Adams Park Community Center provides the support for staffing, space, and equipment. Brooks Goedecker, Community Development Specialist for WUMC, has been working with area organizations to beef up the activities for the program. Goedecker and WUMC have recently collaborated with The South City Open Studio and Gallery (SCOSAG), which operates part time out of the Potter's Workshop, located at Manchester and Tower Grove. Every Tuesday SCOSAG's expert artists work with the seniors on useful works of art that the seniors are then able to take home. Along with art classes, WUMC is preparing to have fitness instruction and dance classes. The Adams Park Senior Program operates out of the Adams Park Community Center on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays and at McCormack House on Mondays and Wednesdays.

## WUMC's Prime Objective Continues to be Safety and Security for the FPSE neighborhood

In order for a community to progress and to move toward self-sustainability it is essential that there are safe streets and homes. That is why WUMC commits thousands of dollars in funding toward safety initiatives and security coordination in the FPSE neighborhood. Kabir Muhammad, Security Coordinator for FPSE, has been successful in creating a monthly neighborhood safety and security meeting, setting up a phone line for concerned residents, conducting neighborhood surveillance, working with authorities to have graffiti removed immediately, and maintaining constant communication with local law enforcement. Along with security coordination, WUMC is committed to assisting the Saint Louis Police Department with facilities and equipment necessary to patrol and create a safe place to live, work, and visit in the FPSE neighborhood. In order to further generate safe streets and homes, WUMC has continued to coordinate and fund the FPSE SafeHome program. The SafeHome program offers safety and security enhancements to homes in participating blocks in the FPSE neighborhood. Along with safety improvements it is the belief that a coordinated network of neighbors will lead to safe streets and communities. So far, 9 blocks within FPSE have participated in the SafeHome program.

**Important Safety Contact Numbers:** SLPD Liaison Officer, Roland Doty - 633-7909 \* FPSE Security Coordinator, Kabir Muhammad - 581-4575 \* SafeHome Program Coordinator, Brooks Goedecker - 633-7926