

A Journal of HOPE

Dear Hope Friends and Supporters,

I remember the “old” days at Hope when we were running a shelter and hospitality house, and when we saw so much pain around us. In the mid-1990s residents in this neighborhood lived in “substandard” housing with failing systems, chipping lead paint and deterioration inside and out. There were many vacant homes on the Hope block and abandoned land at the adjacent intersection of Portland and Franklin. People told us they felt unsafe, disconnected and isolated.

When people live in healthy housing and build connections in community, lives are changed. Those who have the least, benefit the most. So we set out to make a difference. And we have.

We build and maintain healthy housing (173 rental homes now), and we create a living neighborhood hub where people become part of the energy of building the future. We work with public agencies and private investors. We connect to other organizations. Every year hundreds of kids and adults (tenants and others from the neighborhood) find opportunities and find each other at Hope. They give to their community, and they find possibility for themselves. Some of their stories are in this newsletter.

It truly takes a community to build a community—and you are part of Hope’s community. Much has changed and there is much to do. Families with three or more people living in Hope buildings still earn a median income of only \$17,700 per year. When the challenges are the greatest and stress is the highest, youth and their families need community connections more than ever.



Photo by Bruce Silcox

The Hope Camp sendoff: Young participants walk past the new community space in The Wellstone building on Portland Ave.

In these hard times we have cut back at Hope. But we have not cut back on what makes a difference for people in this neighborhood. Together we can all be the community that continues to build community. In this newsletter, Hope Board Co-Chair Clint Hewitt reflects on his contribution to the community and writes, “**We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.**” We thank Clint for those inspiring words. We thank you for what you can do.

Mary Keefe, executive director

P.S. In light of cutbacks, we will not be sending out a holiday card.

voice of hope voice of

Every day at Hope, people are building skills and relationships that create greater possibilities for themselves and their families.

A HOME OF THEIR OWN

It's Monday morning and **Flor Soto** is getting her three youngest children ready for school at Jefferson Elementary. For eight years, they have lived in a three-story Hope rental home on Portland Avenue. When asked why Flor has lived at Hope for so long she firmly states, "I have a home here."

In 1992, Flor moved to the States from her native country, Mexico. She moved to Minnesota to give her children a better future. Today, her daughter Kathy, age 12, wants to be a clothes designer and Bryan, age 11, a fireman. She smiles when she talks about them. Her greatest hope is that her children will make good decisions throughout their lives.

Flor takes adult education classes at Hope and her children are involved in Hope's leadership and learning programs. She made three albums for each child filled with their creative work while involved at Hope.

Flor explains that having a safe place for her family that she can afford has been very important. She's a single mom and her closest relative lives in Nebraska. Flor has a good friend at Hope, Marzia. They share strategies for getting by on little income.

Bonita Watkins has also been part of the neighborhood for a long time—30 years. She moved into a one-bedroom apartment in a Hope building last February. She said it feels good to have her own apartment. The affordable rent and stability have made it possible for her to return to school to be a certified nurse aid and to visit her six grandchildren in Florida for the first time.

Bonita is a leader in a tenant group at Hope called Community Getting Together. The group brings tenants together to build community. She likes to know her neighbors. She says, "I don't want to just live in a building and never communicate. I want people to have a comfortable feeling about where they are living."

For people driving by, the transformation at Franklin and Portland Avenues communicates hope and renewal in a neighborhood that most everyone gave up on. For people like Bonita and Flor, who have experienced the changes around them—they're seeing less crime over the years and believe it's because people care more about the neighborhood and each other—renewal means having a home to feel proud of and community to be a part of.



Ana and Bryan Soto, Hope tenants and participants in Hope's community literacy program.



Bonita Watkins, Hope tenant and leader in Community Getting Together.

MISSION Hope Community is a catalyst for change, growth and safety. We are building a sustainable neighborhood model through community organization, active education, leadership and affordable housing development.

HOPE COMMUNITY, INC.
611 East Franklin Avenue
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404

Phone 612-874-8867
Fax 612-874-8650
www.hope-community.org



of hope voice of hope



Amira Redd performs at the Girls Empowerment Group graduation.

YOUNG LEARNERS & LEADERS

“Other youth programs,” **Aamira Redd** says, “helped me but didn’t really help with life. And I think at Hope it did.” Last spring, Aamira, age 11, entered a national poetry contest as a birthday present to her mom and won. She read her poem aloud to a crowd of people. The theme of her poem was *How Can I Change the World*.

A year before she entered the contest Aamira was very shy and speaking in front of people was challenging. She says, “It was kind of scary.” A friend told her about the Girls Empowerment program at Hope Community and so she dedicated her Saturday mornings to learning about voice, performance, poetry and leadership with other girls her age. Aamira believes it was the program that helped her win the poetry contest. She says, “Hope made me feel better about myself.”

At Hope young people are learners and leaders. We connect with them around their interests and their aspirations. **Rabin Osborne** is 21 years old and lives in South Minneapolis. She first came through Hope’s doors as a student in Hope’s 16-week Micro-Entrepreneur program for individuals wishing to grow a small business, a program partnership with the Neighborhood Development Center. Beyond her ambition to run a photography studio, Rabin committed to an intensive eight month leadership program at Hope. She has big ideas about making community better.

She wants to build unity in her community and create a forum for people to talk about issues that affect their lives. Because of her work at Hope, Rabin feels more assertive and clear about what she wants for her life. When asked how Hope has most impacted her life Rabin responds by saying, “I know where I am coming from and I know where I am going to.”

REACHING FOR SUCCESS

Five years ago **Ivonne Granados Alvarez** and her family moved to the States from Mexico. When she began taking English Distance Learning at Hope last summer, Ivonne’s life changed. She explains, “Before Hope I was feeling outside of the world. Hope helped me to feel more myself and part of community.”

Ivonne learns with students from all over the world—Somalia, Ethiopia, Mexico, Sudan, Afghanistan, Guatemala, and Turkey—to gain critical skills that lead to stronger futures for themselves and their families. One of the regular Saturday volunteers, **Pete Luellen** is inspired by his students. He says, “I can see clearly that they are living the American dream. Most students are coming from a desperate situation where all their life savings has been destroyed and are now here to learn to make things happen for themselves.”

A partnership with Minneapolis Public Schools brings teacher resources to the Hope Learning Center during the week. Volunteers like Pete spend one-on-one time with students. Pete remembers working with one student who brought a book of math problems “as thick as a phonebook” to prepare for her postal exam. She took the test and failed over and over again until she finally passed. Pete says, “She was determined. Her success was never going to be a question.”



Pete Luellen with a Hope Learning Center student.

Photo by Bruce Silcox

Photo by Bruce Silcox



The Hope Block.

Hope Block Stabilization Project

Hope's housing development has focused on new four-story buildings in the last few years, but like all neighborhoods, Hope's neighborhood includes a variety of buildings.

The Hope Block, just south of the Franklin & Portland intersection is where Hope's real estate development vision first took hold. In 1991, we bought our first Hope Block property, a duplex just south of the Franklin and Portland intersection, with the intention that we would rent it affordably to families.

Over the years, we purchased seven more small buildings on the Block, renting to 17 more families. We learned a good deal about fixing up and owning property during those early years. These older properties—most buildings are from the turn-of-the century era—needed a great number of improvements to be able to rent them to families.

Many volunteers put in hundreds of hours to help us fix up those first homes for families. In 1994, we put together our first “real” development project, a rehabilitation of 10 units and interior block improvements that included playgrounds, picnic pavilion, sidewalks and lighting.

Now, 15 years later, we have begun work on a large project to extend the life of these great buildings. Although this is a challenging year for Hope financially as it is for most, we have raised \$1.6 million from city, county and state housing agency funds that are directly dedicated to these buildings. Families living in 16 affordable rental homes in six buildings will see new kitchens, bathrooms, windows, and other necessary improvements. There will also be extensive improvements in the common areas on the block used by all the residents, including rain gardens for stormwater retention.

Fortunately, we are able to relocate tenants to other buildings we own while construction takes place. By spring, construction will be completed, residents will move back in, and these buildings will look nearly new, yet retain their historical character. Most important, we are ensuring that these grand buildings will affordably house families well into the future.

Making a Difference Where It Counts the Most

Clint Hewitt is a long-time supporter of Hope, board member for several years, and is in his second term as co-chair. He brings much to Hope's work as a recently retired landscape architecture professor at the University of Minnesota (and former Associate VP for Planning at the U). Here he reflects as a Hope Donor.

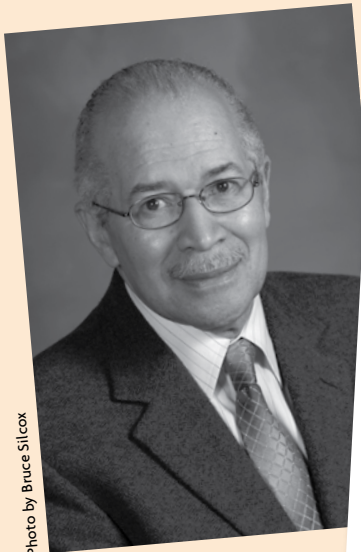


Photo by Bruce Silcox

Almost every week and in increasing numbers, my mailbox is stuffed with pleas from many worthwhile organizations and programs asking for financial support. While I would like to support all of them, I must make some difficult choices. How do I decide where I will share my blessings? I have some simple criteria:

- Will my gift have an immediate impact (change) on the community?
- Our future is in the hands of our children. So, does the organization promote a strong family structure and actively engage and challenge the children to grow and give back to the community?
- Is visible evidence present that the organization has brought about positive change and continues to make a difference and affirm the worth of the individual?
- Is the mission of the organization clearly articulated and is the leadership demonstrably committed to its mission?

I have had the opportunity to observe up close the differences Hope has and continues to make in its community -- and its influences citywide. I have seen the joy in the faces of youngsters participating in Hope programs. I have seen people stand up straight and proudly testify about the difference Hope and its programs has made in their lives. I have seen the physical changes that Hope made to the environment where only a few years ago people were advised not to walk along the street or drive too slowly -- to see it come alive with people and activities is heartwarming.

I believe Hope is the kind of community-based, people-oriented organization that would meet any criteria for support. It certainly meets mine. I know you understand the critical position all community organizations are facing in the current economic environment. Your support will help us to continue to empower members of our community and make the city a better place for everyone to live.

I assure you that your gift will be put, immediately, to productive use -- helping to encourage those who turn to us for assistance to face daily challenges.

We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.


Clint Hewitt

Charitable Giving Strategies

WE ARE ALWAYS MOST GRATEFUL for your annual gifts to Hope Community. Please remember, there are a number of ways to make a charitable gift that you may find more convenient than sending a check.

Gifts of Stock or Mutual Funds. Despite the recent economic downturn, you may have stocks or mutual funds in your portfolio that have appreciated in value. If you donate these securities to a qualified charity, rather than selling them, you will avoid the capital-gains taxes on the profit.

Gifts from IRAs. If you are at least 70½ years old, you can donate IRA money directly to a charity, have it count toward your required distribution for the year, and never pay taxes on it. This strategy can lower your income and maybe reduce the tax you pay on Social Security income. You may also avoid the loss of tax deductions, exemptions and tax credits associated with higher incomes. There are limitations on this strategy and, as always, we suggest you talk to a qualified tax person for guidance.

When You Give to Hope, Lives Are Changed

Safe, well designed housing that people can afford.

**When families have healthy housing,
their lives improve.**

- 173 rental homes (85% are affordable)
- Nearly 50% of 375 Hope tenants are children
- The median income for tenant families larger than three people is only \$17,226
- Hope rental homes include: renovated 1890s homes, new duplexes, row homes and three large buildings on the Franklin and Portland intersection

People invest in learning and education.

**When people are exposed to new opportunities, their hope
for the future grows.**

- Because we want to make a broad impact, we work with hundreds of youth and adults from the community every year, as well as our tenants.
- Children, youth and adults build critical skills, grow confidence and work together to strengthen their lives and build community
- Six days a week Hope staff, full-time and part-time volunteers offer 13 different mentoring programs in arts and academics
- Immigrant adults are learning essential skills they need to get jobs



Families, adults and young people have a safe place to connect and be part of community.

**When people connect, a community
thrives.**

- Young children and their families come to community literacy nights where kids learn as a community surrounds them
- People talk about what's important to them in small gatherings lead by Hope
- Parents work with Hope staff to identify opportunities they want and need
- Community events celebrate and recognize accomplishments

People challenge themselves to build stronger futures.

When people build skills, their world opens up.

- Teens and young adults are taking on an extensive eight-month training in community organizing
- Tenants organize community events to build neighborhood solidarity
- Youth use media to own their talents and voice their visions for the future
- Across all youth programs, people report increased leadership, self-advocacy and conflict resolution skills, and higher levels of knowledge and confidence

Strategic partnerships and collaborations create new ideas.

**When people come together around common
goals, major change is possible.**

- Our many partnerships include other community organizations, universities and colleges, Americorps VISTA, and volunteers both from this community and many other communities
- A partnership with Minneapolis Public Schools brings teachers for Essential Skills classes for immigrants
- Guest artists and mentors add capacity and bring professional skills



Photo by Bruce Silcox

**Top: A child enjoys the Hope tenants' Fall Festival.
Left: A mother and daughter read together at
Learning in Community.**