

A Journal of **HOPE**

MARCH 2009

Hope in Difficult Times

By Mary Keefe, executive director

Yes, this is a very difficult and frightening time. And at Hope Community the need is as urgent as it has ever been. In fact as we have said before, lower income communities are hit harder in hard times. The evidence is all around us. Every day we hear about increasing numbers of people in shelters and at food shelves, for example. All of this makes Hope's work even more important. Healthy, affordable housing is critical, and building community connection and opportunities is even more important to people who can become even more isolated when they have fewer resources. The average median annual income for families of three and larger who are tenants in Hope housing is only \$17,226.

In 2008 we managed 124 rental homes as we completed a new building with another 49 apartments (now 173 all together). At the same time over 600 youth and adults participated at Hope in over 1200 classes, community groups, mentoring sessions, meetings, and community gatherings.

Hope's wonderful, hardworking staff and the inspiring community people they work with make it all happen. New buildings are impressive, but the real work is the day to day relating to tenants and maintaining 173 rental homes, the focus of some of Hope's staff. Others reach out to tenants and other neighborhood residents. Every week children and youth, teens and young adults, parents, Hope staff, teachers and artists, volunteers, Hope tenants, and neighborhood residents come together across their differences in an array of Hope-led opportunities. New families move into new apartment homes, neighbors share dinner, families celebrate together older relatives share stories, tenants discuss their neighborhood, young people speak as community leaders, volunteers read with young children, youth create



Hope tenant Saynab Mohamed with her son

documentaries, adults practice English...this is a typical day at Hope. People come together around their hope for their families and for the future. When people are connected in community, a community is healthier and more resistant to destructive forces and together we will continue to make it happen.

Sending Our Annual Report

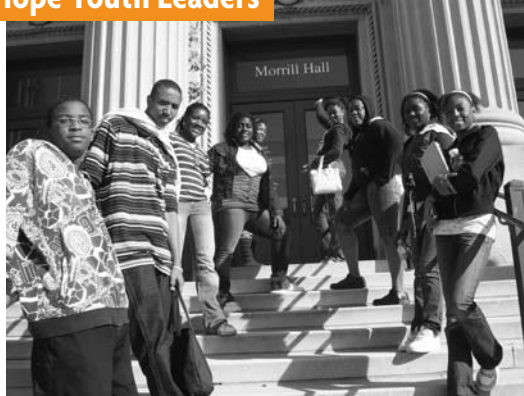
We are exploring opportunities to conserve resources, and you can help us. Would you rather receive our annual report by email? We will print the annual report and will be happy to send it by mail. But we want to explore how many would want to opt for email only. Please contact Susan Marschalk if you have an opinion or want to receive the report by email only—and make sure we have your correct email address. You can reach Susan by phone at 612-435-1823 or via email at smarschalk@hope-community.org. If we don't hear from you, we will mail the report as usual. Thank you for your constant support of our work.

What does involvement at Hope mean to young people and parents?

We asked two youth, ages __, who have been in mentoring groups and a leadership group that worked on a documentary about black history at the University of Minnesota in a partnership with the U. We also asked two parents who, with their children, are part of Learning in Community, a literacy learning program.

“Since becoming involved with the youth leadership group at Hope Community I have taken on more of a leadership role, not only at Hope, but at my school. I am running for student council. I didn’t have any interest in that at first, but through the leadership group and the mentoring groups at Hope I have learned you have to be part of a group to make change. I am more engaged in community and am taking responsibility to make it a better place to grow up and live in. Part of that is through the documentary program where we learn technical as well as practical skills to tell our stories and get community into dialogue around these issues that affect youth.” — *Marquell Ford-Billups*

Hope Youth Leaders



Hope Youth Leaders and filmmakers of “The Takeover,” a documentary retracing the story of the Morrill Hall takeover by the black student union at the University of Minnesota in 1969.

“I learned about African American history through the youth leadership group, about people who helped us and paid the price for us to have a better future. I never had the opportunity to learn about black history until now, and I am so glad that I had the chance to learn about this and to be engaged in my community.” — *Dakessa Hector*



Learning in Community

Patricia and Mikoontz Foote read together in Learning in Community

“[Learning in Community has been] awesome. At first he didn’t want to learn or sit down to read... Before the program, all he wanted to do was play video games and play outside. Now, he wants to go to the library, and he reads all the time. He says, ‘I don’t like that library, lets go to the other one.’ We go to all different kinds of libraries and he always wants to bring home more and more books. Every night he’ll ask, ‘Will you read to me?’ Sometimes he asks, ‘Can I read to you?’ and he reads to me.

My advice to volunteers: Pay attention and

listen to what they [the kids] say. He will know if he doesn’t have your full attention. He will say, ‘Listen! Look at me.’” — *Patricia Foote, mother of Mikoontz Foote*

“I am very grateful for Hope Community and the Learning in Community volunteers. My son TreShawn was in 1st grade when he started Learning in Community last fall. He was having trouble with reading and sounding out the words. At the end of the first semester in school he showed a little improvement. At the end of the year he was named the Most Improved Reader thanks to the volunteers from Learning in Community. It is hard sometimes for TreShawn to open up to people, and he bonded with a volunteer named Heather. He was able to open up with her and succeed to the best of his abilities. We are very thankful to all the volunteers, thank you for being there.” — *JaVon Lee, mother of TreShawn Williams*

You are invited to the Grand Opening of The Wellstone

Tuesday, May 12, 4:30 to 6 p.m.
Hosted by Hope Community and Aeon
620 East Franklin Avenue

The Wellstone, our newest housing development, was completed in November 2008. There are 49 units and so far 39 families have moved into their new homes—that means that almost 80% of the building has been filled. In 2005, The Wellstone won the Green Communities award for the green features integrated into the design of the building including a solar hot water system, a storm water retention system and rain gardens.

Our program speakers will include Minneapolis Mayor RT Rybak, David Wellstone, son of the late Paul and Sheila Wellstone, Dana Bourland, senior director of green communities of the Enterprise Community Partners, Mary Keefe, executive director of Hope Community and Alan Arthur, president of Aeon. Light refreshments will be served and tours of The Wellstone will be offered.

Your continued support has made this possible and you are part of our success! **Please join us** in celebrating this beautiful new building. Call Susan Marschalk if you plan to attend or if you have questions at 612-435-1823.

