



UIC Neighborhoods *Initiative*

Building Partnerships for Stronger Communities and a Stronger University

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The University of Illinois at Chicago

Great Cities Institute

Housing Fund Helps Near West Side and Pilsen

Many Near West Side and Pilsen residents see a need for home repairs. To help low-income owners get loans for improvements, the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative developed a collaboration. The Initiative brought together representatives from the Department of Housing; the Near West Side Community Development Corporation, the Resurrection Project in Pilsen and First Chicago National Bank to develop the Affordable Housing Fund (AHF). A grant proposal to HUD secured \$450,000, delivered over five years, which will be leveraged to raise more funds each year.

The AHF will provide grants to low-income families for rehabbing homes. The maximum amount of the grant is \$10,000 and must be matched by the homeowner. The funds can be used for repairs such as roofing, gutters, tuck pointing, siding, porch repairs, etc. This is an innovative project because it brings together resources from HUD, the university, the city and other various lenders, hence strengthening partnerships.

The project partners will help market the fund, coordinate related city programs, offer home improvement and lead paint workshops and give direct one-on-one assistance to applicants.

This is a unique program which will leverage new resources to spur investment from the private sector and banks in the two neighborhoods.

An overall goal of the program is to stabilize the two areas through the preservation of existing housing and develop community pride. All of the partners in this project are excited and ready to get it off the ground.

To receive more information on the project please contact: Wilma Ward/Near West Side 312-738-2280 Philip Lopez and Louisa Espinoza/Pilsen 312-666-1323.

Community Voices Hopes to Improve Lives

Six women are gathered around a table in a conference room at John A. Walsh Elementary School located, in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago. It is a sunny and brisk fall morning and the mothers of Community Voices have faithfully come for their weekly meeting.

They are bundled up in colorful combinations of coats, sweaters and scarves and most of them have already been up for several hours preparing their children for school.

" I always participated in meetings at my children's schools, but I never did anything to improve my own learning. One day Juan Gamino invited me to participate in a Parent Leadership Program he wanted to start and now it has developed into a magazine called Community Voices, " said Genoveva Tellez.

The six mothers who speak very little English are very eager to voice their opinions about their lives in the United States. They often turn to Juan Gamino, director of Community Voices, for translation during the interview. "Our goal is to build stronger families in the Hispanic community. By educating the mothers about the schools and teaching them English, it will help them to want to get involved in their children's lives," said Gamino.

Gamino started the writing project with support from the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative in a federal grant that ran in 1995 and 1996. The Walsh Local School Council continued support since January, 1997. He is currently looking for new support to continue operation.

A lot of the mothers say that their organization has helped them improve their self-esteem and sense of worth as mothers and wives in their families. "I am a very shy person but when I began writing for our magazine I felt like another person. I felt that what I had to say was important and something came out of me that I didn't know I had. I felt like a better person," said Adela i Nunez.



Although most of the mothers have become acclimated to the American society, many of them miss their life in Mexico. "All my family is in Mexico and I only have my husband and children here. I have a comfortable life in Chicago, but I would like to go back," said Salvador. Naty Farias, who has lived here for eight years has a different opinion. "We moved back to Mexico and I put my kids in school there. My son who is 11 refused to go and wanted to come back to the United States, so I had to come back although I wanted to stay," said Farias.

The mothers of the parent leadership program at John A. Walsh Elementary School in Pilsen. Maria Nelida, Genoveva Tellez, Luz Salvador, Roberto Martinez, Adela Nunez, Naty Farias

Not understanding the English language is one of the greatest obstacles the women face. Maria Nelida had a very unfortunate experience when she and her daughter visited the hospital. "I went to the doctor and didn't know how to ask him what was wrong with my daughter. I thought the doctor said that she had brain cancer and I was so upset and began to cry. A nurse who spoke Spanish came to comfort me and she asked

what was wrong. She found out from the doctor that it was not brain cancer but only a small infection," said Nelida.

The difficulties not only arise in the community, but also within the family. The mothers said that the saddest part is sometimes not understanding their own children. "My son asks me to help him with his homework and I'm not able to do so, it's very frustrating sometimes," said Nunez.

The goal of the magazine is to express various aspects of the parents' lives in the Latino neighborhood of Pilsen. The goal of the Parent Leadership Program is to strengthen the bonds between the family members and in so doing also strengthen the sense of community through committed families. "Traditionally, the mother in Hispanic culture has always been the core of the family," said Gamino. "They take care of the children, the household and their husbands. But in the U.S., they also have to work and it's very exhausting for them. We are trying to preserve the Mexican family model and at the same time create a sense of equal responsibilities in the family. Some of the husbands are very cooperative and others fear that their wives will become stronger than them by learning English and getting involved in the schools."

Gamino wants to see the program expanded by running English classes five days a week for the mothers. He also wants to bring in teachers who can teach them science and math, in addition to the English classes. Many of the mothers want to earn a GED, which Gamino said is not an unrealistic goal. He also wants to incorporate an art program where both the mothers and their children can participate. "The kids and mothers need to work together doing homework and other activities. We're trying to change the way parents and children behave towards each other. When the kids see the parents learning they become motivated and want to learn," said Gamino.

Gamino explained that Mexican society is labeled as a paternalistic society where there are very few choices and most government institutions have a monopoly on education, employment and health matters. When Mexican immigrants arrive to the United States they encounter a culture shock in many ways. The most prevalent of these are relating to formal institutions. They do not understand that they have choices here. By the mothers' involvement in the schools, they begin to learn one part of the system and it becomes easier for them to understand how other parts of the society function. However, it is not an easy process because they face much opposition from both within their family, as well as outside in the community. The program is trying to break an unhealthy pattern and instill new values and changes in the families which eventually affect the larger community.

Midwest HUD Conference Strengthens Partnerships

On September 11, 1997, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, in cooperation with the University of Illinois at Chicago and De Paul University, sponsored the Midwest Regional Conference: *Building Partnerships to Build Communities*.

The goal of the conference was to bring together representatives from federal agencies and institutions of higher education to help foster new or expanded university/community partnerships for community building. Many of the participants praised its value because it was an opportunity to gain new insight into partnerships for continued community

building, and to meet others from the community who share a commitment to working together for community revitalization.

The full day agenda included speeches by Edwin Eisendrath, HUD Representative for the Midwest Region, and Paul Leonard, HUD Deputy Assistant Secretary for Office of Policy Development and Research, as well as representatives from De Paul, UIC and their community partners. After the morning agenda, a variety of workshops such as *Fundamentals Of Partnerships: Essential First Steps; What is Success - A Few Examples; and Obstacles to Success and How to Overcome Them*, were offered to the participants. The afternoon agenda included bus tours and site visits to the Near West Side, Pilsen and Humboldt Park communities.

"This conference was a great opportunity to share best practices of each organization. The partnership we have with UIC is very unique and the resources the university shares with the community is very important for its growth," said Ed Lucas, executive director of the Renacer West Side Community Network.

The conference increased the involvement of partners in a variety of ways. Lucas credited UIC's City Design Center as a good example of a university institution working with the community. He hopes to see stronger involvement in the areas of business collaboration and increased employment for community residents.

UPDATES . . .

The Great Cities Institute Seminar Series presents lectures and discussions on local, national, and international urban issues. Participants include UIC faculty and community activists. All "bag lunch" seminars will be held at UIC's Great Cities Institute, 322 S. Green St., Suite 108, from 12 PM-2 PM. Please call 312996-8700 for further information. Participants are encouraged to bring their lunch.

February 9th - Community Health

- Wendy Young (Assoc. Prof, Public Health)
- Cardiss Collins (Faculty Fellow, GCI)
- Stephanie Itiger (Director, Women's Studies Program)

March 9th - Black / Latino Relations

- Marc Zimmerman (Assoc. Prof, Latin American Studies)
- Nilda Flores (Assist. Prof, Sociology)
- Louise Cainker (Visiting Lecturer, Sociology)

April 6th - University/Community Partnerships

- Loomis Mayfield (Coordinator, UICNI)
- Nacho Gonzalez (Co-coordinator, UICNI)
- Wim Wiewel (Dean, College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs)

UICNI Articles Published in National Journals

Three articles about the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative have been accepted for publication this past year.

One article appeared in the inaugural issue of *Renaissance*, "University Involvement in the Community: Developing a Partnership Model". Co-authors are Dr. David C. Broski, UIC's Chancellor, and Dr. Wim Wiewel, Dean of the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs. For copies of this article, contact Veronica Anderberg at 312413-9128.

The other two are accepted for publication in the future. They are, "Long Term Collaboration: Building Relationships and Achieving Results in the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative, " by Ismael Guerrero, associate director of the Resurrection Project and Wim Wiewel in *Metropolitan Universities*, and "Goal Achievement, Relationship Building, and Incrementalism: The Challenge of University-Community Partnerships, " by Wim Wiewel and Michael Lieber in *Journal of Planning Education and Research*.

Shelter Thankful for Holiday Contributions

The Chicago Christian Industrial League is preparing for a busy holiday season. The homeless shelter has enough volunteers to help throughout the holiday season, but is in need of food, winter clothing, toiletries and other essential items for the homeless.

This year a special telephone hot line has been set up by the shelter. " People can call this number during the holiday season and find out the

specific needs for the homeless," said volunteer coordinator, Stacey Segal.

The Christian Industrial League is also seeking volunteers who would like to arrange holiday parties at the shelter for those who live there.

To donate food and clothing, or to receive more information, please call the hot line at 312-491-2024. Items can also be dropped off at 123 South Green Street, Chicago, IL 60607.

Great Cities Gala Honors Community and University Efforts

The Third Annual Great Cities Gala, held on October 16 at the Four Seasons Hotel Grand Ballroom in Chicago, celebrated all those who have been a part of the successful program. The 25th Ward Alderman, Daniel S. Sobs, and Amoco Chairman and CEO, H. Laurence Fuller, were honored for their many contributions to the university and Chicago area communities.

"The event inspires people to continue their dedication and commitment to the program. It's not just a celebration, but it is also a rededication to continue the good work," said Joan Vaughn, director

of advancement of the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs.

The almost 500 guests that attended the event represented all areas of the community and university. Among some of the corporations, foundations and organizations that participated were Amoco, Ameritech, Peoples Gas, The Metropolitan Planning Council, The Hispanic Housing Development Corporation and various UIC Departments. The audience enjoyed a video presentation on university/community partnerships and a catered dinner.

UIC Chancellor David C. Broski said that Great Cities has contributed to increasing the visibility of UIC. Through its many projects, the university has been recognized both nationally and internationally as an urban land grant model.

Some of the successful programs implemented by Great Cities include restructuring of several Chicago schools to improve academic performance, housing stock improvement and economic development projects in the Pilsen and Near West Side neighborhoods.

The Great Cities program is committed to projects across city limits since the university believes that the metropolitan area can not thrive unless all parts do so. Nationally, UIC is involved in research regarding the relationship between highways and suburban growth; a major violence prevention initiative; and an intensive training program in housing development for over 500 staff of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The success of the Great Cities programs and initiatives continues to grow and helps strengthen the relationships between the university and community.