



Howard Area Community Center Reflections

Summer/Fall 2011

Howard Area Food Pantry Honored

In May, The Howard Area Food Pantry was honored with two awards from the **Greater Chicago Food Depository** for its continued efforts to serve the growing number of hungry individuals and families in Rogers Park.

The Food Pantry received the **Quality Performance Award** and the **Client Connection Award** which recognizes pantries' efforts to address clients' needs beyond food. Each award came with a \$500 contribution. We are grateful for Food Pantry partners like the Greater Chicago Food Depository, Panera, Target and the invaluable contributions of our local churches and individual donors, which help our food pantry provide above and beyond services.



From June 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011, our Food Pantry received 10,454 visits.

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A Quarter-Century of Service

With her much-deserved retirement in July 2011, Sister Cecilia Fandel concluded over 24 years of service to the north of Howard area.

In 1987, Sister Cecilia moved to Rogers Park to complete her MA in Community Organization and Development at Loyola University. During that time, she began a Community Organizing and Outreach internship with HACC, and with it, a commitment to the North of Howard community that would last for decades.

As a community organizer in Rogers Park, Sister Cecilia was instrumental in many initiatives to empower residents to take action in their neighborhood. She helped establish the Rogers Park Drug-Free Coalition, which campaigned for Rogers Park's participation in CAPS. Sister Cecilia was also a major influence in the establishment of Neighbors United in Action and Howard Area Seniors Club.

In later years, Sister Cecilia turned her efforts to the parks system, becoming an advocate for the establishment of public parks at Triangle and Harold Washington Memorial Parks. Sr. Cecilia was also a major influence in the creation of Willye White Park, formerly Gale Park, and its state-of-the-art Recreation Center. In 2009, HACC nominated Sister Cecilia to the City of Chicago Senior Citizens' Hall of Fame, where she was recognized for her outstanding leadership in the community. We wish her well in her retirement, but we will miss her greatly!



Thanks to your continued support, in 2012 Howard Area Community Center will celebrate our 45th year of success in assisting individuals and families to stabilize their lives and become productive community members.

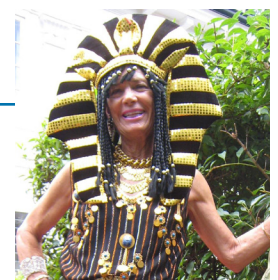
Thank you.

Sister Cecilia Fandel with current HACC Executive Director Bruce Rasey, and former Executive Directors Roberta Buchanan and John Fitzgerald.

Women's Benefit Board Fall Event Raises Over \$10,000

On Thursday, September 16, 2011, the Women's Benefit Board of Howard Area Community Center hosted its annual Book Review Luncheon at the Skokie Country Club. This year was the Women's Benefit Board's tenth year hosting the Book Review Luncheon and its fifth year featuring the incomparable Barbara Rinella. For many years, Ms. Rinella has been celebrating literature and learning through her delightful programs on current books. Taking on the personas of characters from the works of great authors, she has portrayed a wide range of historical, fictional, and public figures with humor and wit.

Over 200 guests enjoyed lunch in addition to Ms. Rinella's memorable performance. The event raised over \$10,000 for HACC programs. As always, we want to thank our guests for supporting our efforts. We also want to acknowledge the support of the Women's Benefit Board members who work tirelessly to make this event a success each year.



This year, Ms. Rinella presented her new book dramatization based on Pulitzer-Prize winner Stacy Schiff's Cleopatra.

From the Executive Director: *HACC Values*



Welcome to the new Howard Area Community Center Newsletter! I hope to share with you more often the wonderful successes of our programs and the new initiatives we are undertaking. We have an inspiring story to tell, and we very much want to share it with you.

I have been honored to lead this wonderful organization and its staff these past 9 months. HACC truly is a community organization that provides a wide array of needed services to the residents of the greater Rogers Park area. Our strength is in our staff, volunteers and board members who provide us with their time, talent, and treasure all in hopes of making a real difference in the lives of those we serve. I am privileged each and every day to see the dedication, professionalism and commitment of our staff as they work with community members to help them improve their lives.

All of our staff met recently to define the values we hold dear: Hope, Accountability, Compassion, Creativity, Respect, and Participation. These organizational values should be seen in all our interactions, and I can assure you they have been very much in evidence as I have come to know the organization and its diverse services.

All of us at HACC pledge to continue to do our best to meet the needs of those who seek our assistance. While our work has become more difficult in the past few years with governmental budget cuts, the organization remains strong and vibrant. Our dedicated staff and volunteers, committed to our values and our mission, will continue to make a positive difference in our community.

Thank you!

Bruce Rasey, Executive Director

Why do kids enjoy coming to SHARP Kids?

“ I get to find out about different stuff, play with people I haven’t known from different schools and learn to cook. ” - SHARP Kids camper Louis

Ms. Gabrys said the SHARP Kids program can help underserved families because “Children are their parents’ best teachers. They take home ideas.” She pointed out that each week, campers receive a set of recipes to take home and are encouraged to try cooking them with their families. “I like trying new foods from all around the world. When I get home from camp, I love cooking the recipes with my mom at home.” said camper Susan. “We see healthier and happy children,” Ms. Gabrys said.

Encouraging families to cook together also encourages literacy. “There’s reading, math, and science in cooking and our campers don’t know that. We bring the academic components to an out-of-school setting” says Ms. Gabrys. “I learned about how the food I put in my stomach is digested and how it gives me energy” said camper Kenya.

“ Because it’s fun. ” - SHARP Kids camper Katie

Summer Youth Program Focuses on Healthy Living

From June to August, every morning at 9:00, about 80 Rogers Park children from third through eighth grade prepared for a busy day of recreation, gardening, cooking, a healthy lunch and other activities. These youth were SHARP Kids Campers.

Now in its 3rd year, SHARP Kids (Seeing Healthy Active Rogers Park Kids) is an urban partnership between HACC, Loyola University Chicago School of Nursing, University



of Illinois at Chicago, and Share Our Strength Cooking Matters™ that empowers underserved, at-risk children and their families in the realization of their full potential through educational, nutritional and recreational opportunities.

“We’re really being bold here,” confirmed Kristin Gabrys, RD, the coordinator of SHARP Kids. “We are a nutrition and fitness-based program in an area where many children don’t have safe places to play or opportunities to eat well.” In 2010, HACC formed a Healthy Living Task Force to advance an agency-wide live-healthy agenda that promotes healthy eating and exercise.

“Our goal is to teach them that they can eat healthy out of their backyard,” Ms. Gabrys said. “Eating healthy will be beneficial in the long run.” Youth in SHARP Kids are hearing the message. Camper Louis said that eating healthy is fun, “because you don’t really do anything when you eat healthy but get strong.” By the end of the Summer Youth Program, youth said they knew how to make snacks healthier, and the overall number of youth who ate unhealthy foods such as high sugar beverages, chips, candy, and cookies decreased significantly. SHARP Kids also incorporates physical fitness through “Let’s Move,” a set of non-competitive physical activities recommended by First Lady Michelle Obama.

“I love cooking the recipes with my mom at home. ” - SHARP Kids camper Susan



Volunteer Creates Legacy of Charity for Family and Friends

For many years, the kitchen at our Main Center had been serviceable, but not user-friendly. But when our after-school Youth Program began holding cooking classes there, a volunteer decided it was time for a change.

Betsy Feld had been a long-time volunteer in our after-school programs, and she had seen first-hand the important work our staff do every day. She thought staff deserved a nicer meeting place, and that the Youth cooking classes needed a better workspace. "I thought that the kitchen, while functional, could be improved. What I wanted to do was make a really great, welcoming place for kids, someplace cheery where they could go after school and learn how to cook properly and where they had their own aprons and supplies."

As the kitchen painting and rehabbing started, Mrs. Feld learned of other needs at HACC. After meeting with the Executive Director and Facilities staff, Mrs. Feld generously decided to donate new kitchen furniture and appliances and take on an additional project, the Main Center's outdoor patio. Mrs. Feld also gave a donation to support all of HACC's programs.

To celebrate completion of the projects, Mrs. Feld invited her friends and family to join her in a joint birthday party and Volunteer Day at HACC. Friends and family pitched in to paint and landscape in and around the Main Center and ended the afternoon with celebrating Mrs. Feld's birthday with refreshments, cake and telling stories. To thank her for her generosity and support, HACC has dedicated the patio as "Betsy's Patio."

Staff as well as youth enjoy the renovated kitchen, featuring two walls of built-in cabinets and all new appliances, generously donated by Mrs. Feld.



Betsy Feld says that her hands-on charitable and volunteer efforts are a part of an older philanthropic movement that began with her grandparents and continued on to her parents. "I got the 'giving gene' from my grandparents, who gave it to my parents, and I am trying to pass it along to my kids," states Feld.

When asked what advice she would give to other volunteers and donors, Mrs. Feld said "The best thing you can do is encourage your children to be regular volunteers in an organization they care about. What you teach your children is what you really believe in."

The impact of Mrs. Feld's dedication to the children and families served by Howard Area Community Center and the employees that work there is immeasurable. The renovated spaces are now busy with children learning how to cook or an employee taking a relaxing break on the outdoor patio. As for the renovated kitchen - the project that started it all - the feeling among HACC employees is best summed up by one of HACC's case managers, Ashley Mojica: "The patio and garden brought color and vibrancy to the organization and everyone eats together now like a family."



What used to be an unused outdoor storage space is now a beautiful staff gathering place, thanks to flowers and patio furniture that were part of Mrs. Feld's donation.



Mrs. Feld and her family and friends volunteered their time to put in the new patio garden.

Volunteers Improve Quality of Programs

Like most social service agencies in Chicago, HACC has seen an increase in clients and a decrease in funding over the last year. However, one resource that has grown in these difficult times is our volunteers.

Volunteers come to HACC for many different reasons—to add to their resumes, make friends, meet community service requirements, and to give back to their communities. Our volunteers will be contributing over \$100,000 in time and expertise to HACC in 2011, while gaining valuable experience working with a non-profit. Our programs rely on volunteers to:

- Run the Emergency Food Pantry and supervise activities for children during the Women's Domestic Violence Support group sessions.
- Provide individualized attention to kids from 6 weeks to 6 years old as classroom assistants at the Family Center.
- Provide after-school tutoring and mentoring to elementary, middle, and high school youth, through our Youth Programs or the Howard Area Leadership Academy.
- Work with adults on basic literacy, English as a Second Language, and GED Preparation as tutors in Adult Education.
- Record and communicate the impact HACC has as volunteer photographers, graphic designers, and web developers with our Development Department.

If you are interested in helping us meet growing needs by volunteering your time and skills, please contact Donna Lagacy, Volunteer Coordinator at (773) 262-6622 or volunteers@howardarea.org.

“ Howard Area Community Center helped me. I volunteer to give back. ”

- Marylou B., Health & Human Services client and Food Pantry volunteer



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Permit 9773

HOWARD AREA COMMUNITY CENTER HIGHLIGHTS



- Our Howard Area Leadership Academy Summer School served 40 students this year with classes including English, Math, and Video Production. Last May, our Video Production class won first prize for the second year in a row, for their documentary "Freedom Riders - Equality in the Southern Interstate" at the 2011 Chicago Youth Community Film Festival, sponsored by Alternative Schools Network.
- In July, we switched our Food Pantry Thursday hours from the morning to the evening to better serve the needs of our clients. Since the switch, we have seen Thursday visits to the Food Pantry increase by 18%, serving an average of 10 more clients each week.
- This summer we instituted a Summer Leadership Internship for 14 and 15-year-olds in our Youth Services Department. The internship offered leadership training and an opportunity for older students to be involved in our annual Summer Camp.
- In August, 32 five-year-olds "graduated" from our Family Center and moved on to kindergarten! At Kindergarten Transition meetings during the year, parents prepared for the transition and discussed their rights as advocates for their children.
- 50% of Adult Education students who took the GED this year passed, exceeding the state goal which is only 35%. Of those who took the GED, 88% passed the essay section which is the hardest section to pass!

For more highlights, go to www.howardarea.org to download our Fiscal Year 2010 Annual Report!

Howard Area Community Center is going green . . .

In an effort to be good shepherds of our limited resources, we are cutting down on printed materials and mailings. If you received this newsletter by email, **thank you** for helping us to reduce paper consumption. If you received this newsletter in the mail, please email mwenzel@howardarea.org to make sure you don't miss our next email-only newsletter! Thank you for your continued support!

Did you know...

Howard Area Community Center serves clients at 7 different locations in Rogers Park.

Home Visiting Services
7500 N Ashland Avenue

Sheila Reynolds Berner Family Center
7510 N Ashland Avenue

Howard Area Leadership Academy
7647 N Paulina Street

Computer Clubhouse Youth Center
1527 W Morse Avenue

Adult Education Services
7638 N Paulina Street

Employment Resource Center
1623 W Howard Street

**Main Center
Health & Human Services**
7648 N Paulina Street