



# Sisters of St. Joseph NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK

Revitalizing a neighborhood. Empowering its people.

August 2014: Spring/Summer Edition

“I DID THEN WHAT I KNEW BEST, WHEN I KNEW BETTER, I DID BETTER.” MAYA ANGELOU

The SSJNN is in bloom! Growth is all around us coloring our world with hope. This spring and summer we have embarked on several new programs that provide educational growth for our children geared towards teaching work readiness skills to prepare children living in poverty for a bright and productive future. In two of our community gardens children are working with mentors on employment related skills. In the International Flavors garden four children are being paid an hourly wage to maintain the garden working with our garden coordinator Gary McEnergy as a mentor. In our Urban Garden located on 19th and Myrtle, four children are planting, harvesting and selling their produce at the Farmers’ Market. These opportunities provide not only environmental education for children between the ages of 14 and 16, but also work on soft skills that will help at risk children learn appropriate workplace behavior and expose them to potential future careers.



Another work readiness program instituted this year is called Pedal Mettle, an earn-a-bike program operating out of our east side location. Pedal Mettle started by Kris Nelson, a local chiropractor, in collaboration with Eric Brozell and Jordan Abbott from Bike Erie and Rita Orinko from Second Harvest Food Bank, teaches children ages 12-18 how to complete minor bike repairs. Children are paired with a mentor and participate in a five week course learning things such as how to repair and change a tire, brakes, chains as well as a multitude of other repairs needed to keep our bikes in working order. If the children complete all 5 sessions and attend the bike safety program provided by the Erie County Health Department (ECHD) they get to keep their bike and receive a free helmet also provided by the ECHD. Eleven children completed the program this summer and 8 are already signed up for the fall session.



MEET OUR NEW STAFF!

**Barb Noonan:**

Barb has been hired to coordinate educational programs at our west side location. Barb has a BS in Education and has volunteered for the SSJNN for several years.



**Margarita Dangel:**

Margarita has been hired as the site director of our new east side location. Margarita has a BS in Special Education and an extensive background in program development and community organizing.



**Gloria Saunders:**

Gloria has been hired to coordinate educational programs at our new east side location. She has a MS in Social Work and a background in case management.



CAMP EXCURSION

There is something about going to camp as a child that brings special meaning to any of us who experienced the excitement of getting out of the city and heading to the forest for a week or a long weekend. Children in poverty rarely get to experience this excitement. Thanks to Bill and Becky Hilbert and Reddog Industries, the children of Little Italy now know the meaning of camp. For the past several years they have sent at least 20 children to Camp Notre Dame. This year, not only did they send 31 children to camp, they purchased clothing, camping necessities and provided duffle bags for each child. They even went one step further and offered to help us with transporting the children to camp and participated in the closing ceremonies acting as the parents to the children they transported.

All of the children had a wonderful experience, and typical of when we send your children to camp, were very quiet on the ride to camp and full of excited chatter of camp stories on the ride home. Some of those stories include riding in a boat for the first time, fishing, making fishing poles, learning about the trees and forest, getting to buy a camp T-shirt (also provided by the Hilberts), making new friends, eating something called Smores that are “the best thing ever”, hiking, sitting around a camp fire, learning new songs and yes – all of our favorites – telling ghost stories.

The children are thankful to the Hilberts for offering them the experience of camp. They would like all of you to know that **CAMP IS THE BEST THING OF THEIR SUMMER**. Oh and as one of them said to me on the ride home, “you should go to camp too. And so should Sister Phyllis. We thought she was going to stay when we saw her riding the tractor cart to the cottages.”



**SISTER ACTION**

On August 2nd, the Sisters of Saint Joseph and Associates went door to door in our east side neighborhood asking people how they can help make life better in the area. They completed surveys and met their new neighbors. The event was a great success with doors opening and neighbors welcoming. Thus far we have completed 60 surveys and are continuing daily outreach.



Tammy Van Buren, SSJA, Mary Fromknecht, SSJ



Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ, Gloria Saunders



Carol Morehouse, SSJ, Nancy Prenatt, SSJ

**POETRY IN MOTION**

This summer the SSJNN started a program to provide entertainment in our community gardens and Ruby Schaaf Park. One of these events was Poetry in the Park where Luchetta Manus, a volunteer at the SSJNN, read two poems written by Amya LaSante one of the children who has participated in programming at the SSJNN.

**Life**

Life is an experiment  
 Life is a test  
 Life is unpredictable  
 Life is like rolling dice  
 You must keep your head up to keep walking  
 The longer you walk  
 The more your past follows  
 Life has to last  
 Don't put a case on your heart to cover up the pain  
 Clear it up by adding water so you can clean the pain  
 Life can be amazing or bad, but you have to make the choice  
 Life is an experiment  
 Life is a test  
 Life is unpredictable  
 You don't know where your soul may lead you



**Happiness**

O lord I thank you for the blessed day  
 The happiness  
 I don't think of the bad  
 Just the good  
 O my Lord  
 What a great day  
 Even if I don't have any money or a job or even a house I just thank you for living  
 Things will get better  
 O my Lord  
 What a great day



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Left to right: Barb and Jim McNamara, Joan Fels, Tom and Sue Elliott pictured with Carol and Joe Pillitteri. Pilgrims not pictured are Greg Germaine and Jim and Karen Hibey.

On Sept. 18, eight friends will leave the U.S. for Spain, where they will walk from Sarria to Santiago – the last 100km of the well-travelled Camino de Santiago (Way of St. James). The idea came to Jim MacNamara while listening to friends Carol and Joe Pillitteri tell about walking the Camino in 2013. Immediately, Jim, his wife Barb, and Tom and Sue Elliott began to plan their pilgrimage. As Jim explains, “we each want to make the pilgrimage for our own spiritual reasons, but we also want this journey to help others in some way.” To that end, the pilgrims will pray for and carry the prayers of others all the way to the Cathedral de Santiago. In addition, they are asking others inspired by their journey to consider a gift to the SSJNN. To submit a prayer request, jot your intention on a slip of paper and send it to the Sisters of St. Joseph of NW PA, c/o Way of St. James, 5031 West Ridge Road, Erie, PA 16506. Or call the SSJ prayer request line at 814-836-4232. To make a donation, please send your gift to the SSJNN, 425 W. 18th St., Erie, PA 16502 and note on your check that your gift is in honor of the Way of St. James Pilgrimage.

### OUR MISSION

The SSJ Neighborhood Network sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of NW Pennsylvania, provides leadership, advocates for local residents, and partners with the broader community to develop opportunities for both personal growth and neighborhood revitalization.

Thank You All for your continued support! Without you, we could not survive. Many Blessings!