



NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER

Neighborhood Leadership Institute *Greater Cleveland's Connection to Neighborhood Leadership and Community Engagement*

Summer 2005
Volume I, Issue 2

NLC GRADS PLAY KEY ROLES IN NEIGHBORHOOD GRANTS INITIATIVE

Graduates of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland are putting their leadership training into practice, using small grants to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods throughout Cleveland.

The grants, which range from \$500 to \$5,000, are made available through Neighborhood Connections, a special initiative of The Cleveland Foundation. Since the program began in 2003, more than 200 neighborhood projects have received funding.

Groups can apply this summer for a new round of grants to support neighborhood projects in Cleveland (see below). Originally piloted in just 11 neighborhoods, the program is now open to projects serving every neighborhood in Cleveland.

NLC graduates have been active in the initiative as both grant recipients and grant makers. More than two dozen NLC grads have received grants for a wide variety of projects, including summer basketball in Glenville, oral history in Tremont, and family literacy in Buckeye-Shaker. (See page 3 for profiles of grantees.)

Nearly a dozen other grads have served on the Neighborhood Connections Grant Making and Monitoring Committee (see page 2). The 18-member body is composed exclusively of Cleveland residents recognized as active community leaders. A focus group of NLC grads helped to develop the selection criteria for the committee members.



NLC grads Jerry Rugley, Janet Loehr and Pat Kawalek at a Grant Making and Monitoring Committee meeting. Photo by Lee Gleason, Class 15

Many groups that receive funding from Neighborhood Connections are new and have no previous experience managing projects or working with grant funds.

For that reason, Neighborhood Connections makes technical assistance available to all grant recipients.

The Cleveland Foundation contracts with the Neighborhood Leadership Institute (NLI) to help provide that assistance. Lee Gleason (NLC Class 15) leads NLI's technical assistance

efforts. While some of the assistance must necessarily focus on fundamental matters such as effective budgeting and reporting, Gleason sees greater potential in NLI's ability to connect grant recipients to one another.

"NLI has a network of more than 600 grassroots leaders," notes Gleason. "The more we draw on their skills and experience to assist grantees, the closer we'll get to our vision of 'neighbors helping neighbors'."

Having come to the end of a successful three-year pilot period, Neighborhood Connections recently received funding from The Cleveland Foundation to continue for at least another three years. As the initiative grows, it will continue to count on NLC grads for their participation, guidance, and leadership.

TO LEARN MORE...

Visit the Web site at www.neighborhoodgrants.org
Call Lee Gleason (NLC Class 15) at 812-8700.
Call Cynthia Lewis (NLC Class 20) at 861-3810.

Attend a Grantseeker Orientation Session:

Wednesday, July 13

Tuesday, July 26

Monday, August 1

Times and locations to be determined.

Grassroots Leadership



Don Slocum
Executive Director

Leadership Link

If you are interested in learning more about how small grants can build leadership capacity and improve neighborhoods, visit the Web site of the Neighborhood Small Grants Network (NSGN) at www.nsgn.org. Click on the "Resources" tab and look for "Resources for Grassroots Groups."

Grassroots Leaders Know What's Best for their Neighborhoods

Dear Neighbor,

In our initial business plan for the Neighborhood Leadership Institute (NLI), we said that the goal of NLI is to establish a network of grassroots leaders with the "skills, coaching, and support to exercise control over the future of their communities." With the participation of NLC grads on the Grant Making and Monitoring Committee for Neighborhood Connections (see page 1), we have a promising example of grassroots leadership in action.

I love Neighborhood Connections' strategy of providing small grants for neighborhood projects, but I think what really sets this program apart is the composition of the Grant Making and Monitoring Committee. Why? Because a committee made up of grassroots leaders is more knowledgeable about the needs of the neighborhoods and more likely to make decisions in the best interests of those neighborhoods.

As committee member Janet Loehr (NLC Class 17) puts it, "All of us who are doing this live in the city. We don't work for the foundation. We're all volunteers." Pat Kawalek (NLC Class 6), who also serves on the committee, adds, "We can relate to the applicants and their situations. We've been through some of those situations ourselves."

That doesn't mean that the committee members are pushovers. Cynthia Jones (NLC Class 15) warns, "Whatever the group is applying for, they must have a passion for it. We can

tell the difference." Or, as Loehr notes, "It's harder to fool someone who's done it."

The grassroots leaders on the committee also know how to distinguish projects driven by residents from projects directed by institutions. Kawalek worries that nonprofit organizations are looking at Neighborhood Connections as another potential source of funding, but Loehr stresses, "We really try to look at the small neighborhood groups."

Many of the original committee members are nearing the end of their three-year terms. They say it's time for new leaders to succeed them. Kawalek believes that NLC graduates should step forward: "I think everyone who has gone through NLC would put the skills they learned to use. I would encourage them. It's very rewarding."

I hope that those of you who live in Cleveland will consider volunteering to serve on the committee. If you are interested, please contact Lee Gleason here at NLI.

Let's not miss the chance to demonstrate how responsible and effective grassroots leaders can be when they have the opportunity to exercise control over the allocation of philanthropic resources in their own communities.

Warmest regards,
Don

NLC Graduates Talk about Serving on the Grant Making and Monitoring Committee



"It can get intense at times. Reading the proposals can be time consuming. You must be committed to it."

Cynthia Jones
NLC Class 15
Mt. Pleasant



"You need a vehicle for the everyday Mom and Pop to get funding."

Patricia Kawalek
NLC Class 6
St. Clair/Superior



"You need people from the communities on the committee because they know what the need is in their communities."

Jerry Rugley
NLC Class 19
Cedar/Central



"We try to focus on the grassroots level."

Janet Loehr
NLC Class 17
Cudell

Meet NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS GRANTEES

JULIE CANDELA, NLC Class 15
KENTUCKY COMMUNITY GARDEN

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Julie Candela volunteers as the assistant coordinator at the Kentucky Community Garden on Cleveland's Near West Side. Established in 1941, the garden has more than 100 plots maintained by members who pay \$10 per plot and commit ten volunteer hours per year. Using organic techniques, the members grow flowers, fruits, and vegetables—and even maintain a few beehives.

The remarkably diverse membership includes African-American, Appalachian, Hispanic, Italian, Romanian, and Vietnamese families, as well as students from Kentucky School and residents of nearby homeless shelters, nursing homes, and residential substance abuse programs." People who have

moved away come back from places like Shaker Heights and Bay Village to work in the garden. According to Candela, the garden is a great equalizer. "When you're in the garden," she notes, "You can't tell who's rich or who's poor. It's all about who has the best gardening tips."

HOW THE GRANT(S) HELPED

Spurred by that spirit of inclusiveness, the Kentucky Community Garden sought a Neighborhood Connections grant to build raised garden beds that could be accessed by senior citizens and others in wheelchairs. The grant of \$4325 also paid for a roto-tiller to assist elderly and disabled members.

ADVICE TO NLC GRADS

"The grant application process is user friendly. You don't have to be a professional to get one of these grants. You just have to have a clear idea of what you want to do with the money."

PAM HUBBARD, NLC Class 17
GOLDEN CIPHERS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Serving youth ages 12 to 18 in Cleveland and its inner-ring suburbs, Golden Ciphers aims to "reconnect family structures and recreate our communities." The organization's afterschool and school-based programming includes life skills, Rites of Passage education, and community service. In addition, participants learn about pregnancy and HIV/AIDS prevention, as well as alcohol, tobacco, and other drug prevention.

Youth are referred to Golden Ciphers through their schools, by their peers, and sometimes by "self-referral." The organization also accepts referrals from the juvenile justice system and social service agencies. Hubbard, the founder and executive director of Golden Ciphers, hopes to build the organization with the



concepts of a sorority or fraternity: pledge as a youth and remain a member for life. Such an approach, says Hubbard, can build both intergenerational mentoring and ownership of the organization.

HOW THE GRANT(S) HELPED

Established as a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization in 2001, Golden Ciphers has received a \$5000 grant from Neighborhood Connections in each of the past three years. The grants have paid for program supplies, stipends for guest speakers and visiting artists, and transportation for tours of Ohio colleges. The funds have also enabled Golden Ciphers participants to attend the annual Ohio Youth for Justice competition in Columbus. The grants have not paid for staff. Golden Ciphers is run by a committed, trained staff of ten volunteers and mentors.

ADVICE TO NLC GRADS

"Don't be afraid. You don't have to do the process yourself. The technical assistance from NLI has been extremely helpful. This is an excellent way for newcomers to get their feet wet and for people to get their dreams supported."

MARK MCCLAIN, NLC Class 21
MOUNT PLEASANT SAILS/E.C. SAILS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The six-week summer program introduces young people from Cleveland and East Cleveland to many forms of boating, including canoeing, kayaking, and sailing. The participants range in age from 11 to 14. They are guided by a team of volunteers including college students, church members, teachers, and other professionals.

In addition to boating expertise, participants also learn math, reading, and team-building skills. Every youngster who participates in the program must pass the rigorous Ohio Boating Education Course. Those who pass the test get a card that is the equivalent of a driver's license for boating. McClain reports that the program gives young people much more than practical skills: "It really establishes their confidence and their self-esteem."

HOW THE GRANT(S) HELPED

The \$5000 grant paid for boating equipment; notebooks and educational materials; and buses to transport the participants. New Sardis Primitive Baptist Church served as the fiscal agent for the grant. The program will receive a second \$5000 grant this summer.

ADVICE TO NLC GRADS

"As grassroots leaders, we need to be responsible for developing creative ways to serve the public. Neighborhood Connections really assisted me in showing that you can take an idea—a small idea—and make it into something very meaningful for the community."



What's Inside

Neighborhood Leader

- Grants Available for Neighborhood Projects
- Grassroots Leaders Make Grant Decisions
- NLC Grads Receive Grants

SUPPORT FOR NLI IS PROVIDED BY:

CITY OF CLEVELAND
CLEVELAND CITY COUNCIL
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PPG INDUSTRIES
RPM, INC.
SAINT LUKE'S FOUNDATION
THE CLEVELAND FOUNDATION
UNITED WAY SERVICES OF GREATER CLEVELAND

NLI recently received a grant of \$50,000 for general operating support from the Saint Luke's Foundation of Cleveland.

Randell McShepard, director of community affairs for RPM, Inc., spoke at the graduation ceremony for Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland on April 28. RPM also co-sponsored the ceremony.

Collinwood High School is hosting a special summer session of NLI's Schools As Neighborhood Resources program. The high school will be open for educational and recreational activities from June 20 through August 12. Open to Cleveland residents of all ages, the program runs from 12:30 to 7:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Free lunch will be served from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. for anyone 18 years old and under. For more information, contact Jason Lewis at NLI.

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