

# NLI NEIGHBORHOOD LEADER

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

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Volume II, Issue 1

## Tours Highlight Neighborhood Assets, History

On two Saturdays in March, 36 grassroots leaders took part in what has become a rite of passage for participants in Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland: neighborhood tours. The two half-day tours covered close to a dozen Cleveland neighborhoods and revealed a community rich in history and assets.

Neighborhood tours reinforce several of the most important lessons that lie at the heart of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland.

One: Leadership requires teamwork and collaboration. NLC participants work in teams to organize and guide the tours of their own neighborhoods. They must divide research tasks and agree on a tour route.

Marie Jones, new to the Collinwood area, enjoyed working with longtime residents George Neff and Tim Davis, as well as Tangela Woods of neighboring Euclid. "Appreciating what people bring to the team is important," Jones emphasizes.

Two: Identify neighborhood assets. Too often policy makers and social service providers define Greater Cleveland's neighborhoods in terms of needs and deficiencies. The NLC curriculum rejects that approach and encourages grassroots leaders to identify and build on the assets of their neighborhoods. Neighborhood tours showcase those assets.

Central resident Maxine Tutstone embraces the asset-based approach. "A lot of people just focus on the negatives. I'm interested in what causes the negatives to change." Bruce Martin of East Cleveland



Members of NLC Class 22 walk along the Superior Viaduct. Photo by: Lee Gleason, Class 15

found inspiration in discovering new treasures. "This class is helping me stay here in the Cleveland area," he says.

Three: Learn from history. The history of Greater Cleveland's neighborhoods is a history of change. As this year's tour participants found out, Cleveland's neighborhoods have experienced dramatic changes over the past 100 years—economic changes, demographic changes, and changes to the physical environment.

The Buckeye neighborhood was once home to one of the largest Hungarian populations (outside Hungary) in the world. Several of the structures along Glenville's "Church Row" were actually built as synagogues. Vast blocks of new homes have transformed the landscape of Central.

The history lesson was not lost on Erik Johnson of Old Brooklyn. "I'm really fascinated by the fact that Cleveland was booming at one time. We're struggling to define ourselves now, but I really believe that Cleveland has the potential to become a major player in the economic development of Ohio and of the country."

*...Continued on page 3*

# Grassroots Leadership



Don Slocum  
Executive Director

## Leadership Link

Neighborhood tours highlight community assets. Since we started Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland in 1994, we have made use of the work of John Kretzmann and John L. McKnight of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute (ABCD) at Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research.

ABCD's Web site includes several useful workbooks and publications that demonstrate how to identify and map community assets. We also have copies of some of the workbooks here in the office if you would like to borrow them.

Visit ABCD's Web site:

[www.northwestern.edu/iprabcd.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/iprabcd.html)

## Discovering New Audiences for Neighborhood Tours

Dear Neighbor,

Neighborhood Tours (see page one) have been an important part of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland (NLC) since we began the program back in 1994. For most people who go through the program, the tour is one of the highlights of their NLC experience.

Tour participants enjoy learning about other neighborhoods, and they take pride in presenting their own neighborhoods. Many are surprised to discover the assets that exist even in so-called "disadvantaged" neighborhoods.

I think it's time to share these discoveries with other audiences. Why not start with teachers, police officers, social workers, and others who provide essential services in our neighborhoods? Very often they do not live in the neighborhoods that they serve. A tour for those service providers, organized by neighborhood residents and focused on neighborhood assets, would go a long way toward establishing a climate of mutual respect—so often missing these days—between neighborhood residents and the people who serve them.

And how can we even think about regionalism when so many city and suburban residents have never set

foot in one another's neighborhoods? I'm glad that the Voices and Choices initiative is starting a community-wide conversation about our regional assets, but is anyone talking about the assets of places like Glenville, Mount Pleasant, and Clark-Metro? Neighborhood tours for Voices and Choices participants could help them see that our region's assets are not limited to downtown and University Circle.

Who is better qualified to organize and conduct these tours than the grassroots leaders who have graduated from Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland? A plan to pilot tours in one or two neighborhoods would no doubt be a strong candidate for a Neighborhood Connections grant.

If you would like to submit a Neighborhood Connections proposal to organize tours of your neighborhood, please contact Lee Gleason here at the NLI office. She will explain the application process and help you connect with other interested NLC graduates.

Let's share the neighborhood tour experience that so many NLC participants have enjoyed over the years.

*Warmest regards,  
Don*

The Neighborhood Leadership Institute exists to develop grassroots leadership that will contribute to rebuilding the bonds of community and improving the quality of life for neighborhood residents throughout the Greater Cleveland area.

# Leadership In Action

## *Tours Highlight Neighborhood Assets, History* Continued from page 1

Four: Break down barriers between people. Stereotypes thrive amidst ignorance. NLC combats that ignorance by bringing together the most diverse group of participants of any leadership program in Greater Cleveland. Through the neighborhood tours, participants get a firsthand look at unfamiliar neighborhoods from the perspective of grassroots leaders who live in and care about those neighborhoods.

For Deitri Villarreal of Cleveland Heights, the tour of Collinwood's lakeshore area opened her eyes. "I had never seen that part of Collinwood before. When you think 'Collinwood,' you kind of think negatively. So it's nice to see the positive side of it." Abdul Ameen of Fairview Park echoed those sentiments: "I didn't know it was that nice. I like to see that there are communities in Cleveland that are as nice as the suburbs."

Grassroots leaders know that their neighborhoods face many real and difficult challenges. They enroll in Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland because they have deep roots in their communities and want to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods. The neighborhood tours serve as reminder of why that is a battle worth fighting.



Members of NLC Class 22 on the tour.  
Photo by: Lee Gleason, Class 15

### ***Members of Class 22 share thoughts about the Neighborhood Tour. . .***

*"I think people put a lot of effort into the tour. I was impressed with the degree of preparation."*

*-Ric Wilberg (West Boulevard)*

*"To me it was interesting to note that blue-collar families own homes along the lakeshore."*

*-Chuck Willis (Glenville)*

*"I actually learned a whole lot more than I thought I knew."*

*-Brian Draper (Shaker Heights)*

*"That was an interesting conversation about how to deal with the homeless population near all those expensive homes [in Ohio City]."*

*-Judy Drost (Riverside)*

*"I knew there were a lot of churches in Fairfax, but I didn't know there were that many!"*

*-Conni Blair (Downtown)*



Tour participants stand on the shore of Lake Erie in Collinwood. Photo by: Lorenzo Hibbitts



The tour of Glenville included a stop at the Rockefeller Park Greenhouse. Photo by: Lorenzo Hibbitts

# What's Inside

Neighborhood Leader

- *Tours Highlight Neighborhood Assets, History*
- *Discovering New Audiences for Neighborhood Tours*

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## NLI NOTES

The Cleveland Foundation has awarded **NLI** a grant of \$140,000 to support and sustain **NLI's** network of neighborhood leaders.

**NLI** has also received grants of \$13,500 from The Abington Foundation and \$13,450 from the Thomas H. White Foundation, a KeyBank Trust. The grants will support efforts to build technological capacity at **NLI**, East End Neighborhood House, and Harvard Community Services Center.

The following Cleveland City Council members provided funding support for Class 22 of Neighborhood Leadership Cleveland: Anthony Brancatelli, Pat Britt, Joe Cimperman, Kevin Conwell, Brian Cummins, Zack Reed, Sabra Pierce Scott, Robert White, Jay Westbrook and Matt Zone.

Class 22 was also supported by a grant of \$18,000 from the Raymond John Wean Foundation and an allocation of \$20,000 from United Way Services of Greater Cleveland.

**Gennorris Williams-Heard** (Class 19) and **Isiah Powell** (Class 21) have joined the Neighborhood Connections Grant Making and Monitoring Committee.

**NLC** graduates who live in Cleveland's Ward 6 met in March with their council member, Pat Britt, to discuss issues of importance in their ward.

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