**ARISE DETROIT! NEIGHBORHOODS DAY,**

**AUG. 5, 2023**

**EAST SIDE EVENTS: REOURCE FAIR, PEACE MARCH, FARMER’S MARKET, AFFORDABLE HOUSING ANNOUNCEMENT**

By Laydell Harper

Special for ARISE Detroit!

The 17th annual ARISE Detroit! Neighborhoods Day was an inspiring display of the best of Detroit in all parts of the city. Here’s a look at some of the events on the city’s east side.

**Community United for Progress**

Neighborhood’s Day participants spent the day playing games, grilling hotdogs and enjoying the 17th annual Neighborhoods Day picnic. Community United for Progress**,** Coordinator **Shirley Burch** commented, “This is our 16th year with Neighborhood’s Day. We provide information to the community that will create a healthy environment and is created through education, health and safety.”

The theme for this year was Honoring our Armed Forces. “We have several branches of Service people represented today,” said Shirley Burch, Community United for Progress coordinator.

 In attendance were Army soldiers in uniform, Navy, Marines, air force, local police officers, and firemen (complete with a huge fire truck for both kids and adults to explore). Adults and kids had an opportunity to interact with armed forces, and men and women with the police and fire departments.

The event included a huge outdoor neighborhood picnic, complete with all the fixing’s, hot dogs, hamburgers and a whole barbecued pig. The picnic was held at Dad Butler Park, a newly renovated park funded by the Kellogg Foundation.

The park is behind the Belmont Shopping Center/, 19607 Dequindre at Eight Mile on Detroit’s northern border. . The park has a neatly manicured lawn, colorful new swings and slides, a soccer field, baseball diamond, a walkingtrail and a petting zoo. The park is also designed to accommodate handicapped children.

 Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan attended the event complemented the crowd for the great turn out..

 **PEACE CITY AT THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH**

The Neighborhoods Day event this year for the Church of the Messiah highlighted the peace the congregation's community work has brought to the surrounding Island view neighborhood near Belle Isle..

According to the Detroit Free Press, each year, the Church of the Messiah organizes Silence the Violence, one of the largest anti-gun violence marches in the country and honors gun violence victims in a Christmas event called Fallen Angels. Additionally, after someone stole a 6-foot-tall green tinted Jesus off the side of the church, Rev. Barry Randolph co-founded Citizens United for Safety (C.U.F.S.). The grassroots organization brings together local government, law enforcement, business leaders, religious organizations, and average citizens to combat crime and foster pride in the neighborhoods and has been recognized in the city and suburbs for crime prevention.

The 142-year-old non-traditional Episcopal church on the lower east side, located at 231 E. Grand Blvd, within walking distance to Belle Isle serves the needs of the Island view community. **Rev. Barry Randolph**, a strong, progressive leader, is pastor of this iconic church.

The church plays an important role in this community. The historic church manages more than 213 affordable housing units and is the largest developer in the neighborhood, according to Rev. Randolph, known to his congregation as Pastor Barry.

It also offers medical services, free internet access and solar-powered charging stations to residents who wouldn't otherwise have access, all while working to support neighborhood residents' ideas, teaching them how to be successful entrepreneurs and serving as a business incubation center. Randolph said.

A walking tour of the neighborhood was an important part of the Neighborhoods Day event. Pastor Barry led the tour and offered historic information about the neighborhood.

Labeled Peace City for Neighborhoods Day, the event consisted of programs promoting peace and public safety. There was a young people’s Peace conference with young people making peace pledges on how to bring peace to their neighborhoods. Participants were mostly young Black men that want to make a difference. The program was aimed at reducing area crime

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**THE STAFFORD HOUSE: NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The Stafford House was a major attraction for Neighborhoods Day on at 9301 Oakland Avenue. The entire program was focused on Stafford House, a community development nonprofit, and Stafford House board members, and included **Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan** and neighbors from the area..

To look at the vacant building today, it would be hard to believe that a year from now it will be improved with a $3.5 million renovation, according to Stafford House board chair, **Lendon Crosby**..

“We’re determined to complete it by next year,” he said. “

The renovated building will be a mixed-use use development with a number of affordable housing units for area residents.

Calvin Johnson, with the City of Detroit Planning and Development department, said, “ This property is not only important to this neighborhood, but also to the entire city of Detroit. This area has a rich history that is important to the city’s history. “This development will add so much to this area.”

Duggan congratulated ARISE Detroit! Executive Director, **Luther Keith.**

“Congratulations to Luther Keith for Arise Detroit being a success again this year,” he said. “ More than 100 events (throughout the city) this year.”

The mayor enthusiastically shared some new projects coming on line in the city.

 “This year I was so pleased when the Parks Department completed the spectacular Riverside Park down underneath the Ambassador Bridge” he said “ The crowds we have seen have been tremendous. It has become the jewel of southwest Detroit. Very shortly we’re about to have another jewel. We’re going to open Roosevelt Park right in front of Ford’s Michigan Train Station. I will project it will become the most photographed location anywhere in the city. Give yourselves a hand. This is a great day for the city.”

**Patricia Dockery,** Executive Director of Stafford House, is a longtime resident of the Oakland areand a has a vision for the North End neighborhood.

She said she remembers when it was a thriving area. Stafford House is a 501c3 nonprofit that was started 15 years ago to memorialize Dockery’s grandfather ,

After the depression Moses Stafford brought over 200 families from the south to work in the auto factories in Detroit for good paying jobs, Docker[ said.

Dockery’s family came in 1950. The home she occupies today is down the street from the house she was born in. That’s why this area means so much to her.

When asked why she purchased the property, Dockery responded, “all land is valuable.”

She said the Oakland Avenue area had deteriorated.

“There were no lights on Oakland, D-Dot had stopped bus service on Oakland, it was completely blighted,” she said.

Dockery recalled the area’s heyday:

 “I remember this being a fabulous neighborhood, right across the street was Red’s shoe shop, and just up the street was Phelp’s Lounge. On my block, Smokey Robinson lived in my block, Diana Ross, and Aretha Franklin were just a street over. Oakland Avenue was a place we came to for restaurants and entertainment. We hope to make it that way again.”

**OAKLAND AVENUE FARMERS MARKET**

The Oakland Avenue Urban Farm was directly across the street from the Stafford House event. And it was truly a site to see. They were pleased to be a part of the 17th Annual Neighborhoods Day. Many of their new customers were there because of Neighborhoods Day and said they would come back again for their vegetables.

Nothing says summertime like fresh fruits and veggies, and there plenty of both at the Oakland Avenue Farmers Market on Oakland Avenue.

The fruits and vegetables were sold to eagerly waiting customers. The kale greens were so large and green they looked artificial, and the green peppers and other vegetables were also huge.

Oakland Avenue Farmers Market is an outdoor market open on Saturdays until 3 pm. The market is located at 9354 Oakland Avenue.

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*If you or your organization is interested in participating in Neighborhoods Day 2024 start planning your event now. The 18th Annual Neighborhoods Day 2024 will be held Saturday, August 3, 2024.*