

## OSU Extension/University District: A Model of Collaboration and Commitment

### BACKGROUND

**Weinland Park** (WP), one of the neighborhoods in the University District, was formerly plagued by drugs, gangs, crime, substandard/vacant & abandoned housing, low performing schools, commercial disinvestment and high un-/under-employment as detailed in the University Neighborhoods Revitalization Plan ([http://campuspartners.osu.edu/assets/documents/Concept\\_Plan.pdf](http://campuspartners.osu.edu/assets/documents/Concept_Plan.pdf)). However, when E. Gordon Gee accepted his position in 1990 as President of The Ohio State University, he was appalled by the conditions of the neighborhood and felt the University should and could do more to improve the quality of life and housing in the neighborhoods surrounding The Ohio State University. Thus, Campus Partners was established in 1995 and OSU Extension was invited to be of service. Because of President E. Gordon Gee's familiarity with the work and reputation of OSU Extension, he enlisted the assistance and advice of Dean Bobby Moser of the College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and Keith Smith, Director of OSU Extension. Conclusively, a neighborhood based model of collaboration and commitment was developed.

OSU Extension took an Extension Educator, **Susan Colbert**, out of the Franklin County office and assigned her to the University District in 2000. This was highly unprecedented, since most Extension Educators provide programming and services to residents throughout their respective counties. Moreover, OSU Extension set up an office in the neighborhood, where residents could easily access Extension services, programs and staff. The office is now co-located in the **Schoenbaum Family Center**, located at 175 E. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue at Summit St., Suite 205, Cols, OH. The Center is owned and operated by the College of Education and Human Ecology.

OSU Extension also relocated its **Community Computer Center** from the Franklin County office to the Godman Guild Association, 303 E. Sixth St., Cols, OH 43201, where they teach free basic and affordable, advance computer classes for a nominal charge to residents.

Colbert reports directly to Gregory Davis, **Assistant Director of Community Development**, who supervises her work in the District. She receives administrative/financial support from CD's Office Associate, Sandy Odrumsky and OSU Extension's Business Office and occasionally OSU's Office of Sponsored Programs.

Colbert and team is charged with the responsibility of fulfilling the land-grant mission, which strives to improve the quality of life among all central Ohio residents through research, service and training.

In the University District, Colbert has attempted to fulfill the mission of OSU Extension by **expanding** Extension based programs, including resources to the neighborhood; **engaging** OSU faculty, students and staff; and **educating & empowering** residents with the knowledge, resources and skills essential in becoming self-sufficient.

### TEAM

Colbert (1 Full Time) has a **dedicated team of staff/volunteers (1 Full Time/4 Part Time) and residents**, who are committed to the mission of Extension. They are truly passionate and committed to the people and their work in the community. Each member of the UD team represents one of the four program areas: Family and Consumer Sciences; Community/Economic Development; 4-H Youth Development and Agriculture/Natural Resources: **Lois McCampbell** (Housing); **Tress Augustine**(Master Gardner/4-HYD); **Latisha Jeffrey** (Learning Center/IDA), **Kimyatta Lunsford** (Receptionist) & **James Stiving** (Business Dev).

The OSU Extension/University District has **volunteers** from the Corporation of National Services; American Association for Retired People; Vocational Guidance Services; The Ohio State University; Ohio Department of Jobs & Family Services Work Experience Program; and Ohio CDC Association.

The OSU Extension/University District team has an **Advisory Committee**, who meets quarterly with the team to provide invaluable advice and support to the staff and volunteers in the U.D. The Advisory Committee is comprised of a dedicated group of community, corporate, civic, church and collegiate leaders. Members of the 2013-14 OSU Extension Advisory Committee: Angela Bowlin (College of Education/Human Ecology); Karen Bruns (OSU Extension); Matt Martin (Kirwan Institute); Trudy Bartley (IMPACT); Steve Sterrett (WP Collaborative), Joyce Hughes (WPCCA); Stu Itani (Legal Aid Society); and Emiley Giffen (Fifth Third Bank).

## **FUNDING**

OSU Extension Administration funds the Program Director (1FTE) position. All other personnel, program and office space expenses are covered by grants, contracts, donations and/or other funders.

## **AWARDS**

- C. Peter Magrath University Community Engagement National Outreach Scholarship's Exemplary Program Award (October 2011).
- Leadership Ohio Award for Excellence (May 2011)
- Walter and Marian English Award from the United Way (August 2010)
- The Godman Guild Association Partner of the Year Award ( June 2010)
- The Ray Miller Institute for Change and Leadership (December 2009)
- The John Stitzlein Award for outstanding contributions to diversity in programming (Sept 2009)
- Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbank Benefit Bank Award (November 2006)
- OSU's Department of Human and Community Resource Development Out on the Limb Award for outstanding achievements and accomplishments (January 2005)
- OSU Extension Most Notable Ideas Award (May 2004)
- Fifth H Award for innovative programming ( July 2003)

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

OSU Extension/University District attributes much of its success to its **unique programs and strategic partnerships**. Moreover, the team uses an asset based approach to community development, which focuses on the strengths and assets of the community instead of the deficiencies of a neighborhood or its' residents. This approach has helped us tremendously gain the respect and admiration of residents and stakeholders in the community. Partners include: Ohio Housing Finance Association, OCDCA, Ohio Fatherhood Commission, Ohio Child Support Enforcement Agency, United Way of Central Ohio, Columbus Foundation, Godman Guild Association, Fifth Third Bank, Huntington Bank, Campus Partners, Weinland Park Collaborative, City of Columbus, NRP Group, LLC and others too numerous to mention!

## **MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance** – OSU Extension, in collaboration with OSU's Fisher College of Business, Moritz College of Law, OSU's African-American/African Studies Extension Center and Godman Guild, provide free tax preparation services to low-moderate income, working individuals in the City of Columbus. Because of these services, over 1,000 families have recovered in excess of \$2.5 million in tax credits.
- OSU Extension, in collaboration with Connect Ohio, provides free **Basic Computer Training** to over 1,500 area residents. Because of Every Citizen Online and stimulus funding, OSU Extension was able to deploy 4 Computer Instructors into the community and provide this training to computer illiterate residents. These residents included senior citizens, formerly incarcerated, elderly, minorities, unemployed and others. Our Instructors offered trainings at Goodwill Columbus, Henkels & McCoy, Life Care Alliance, 2nd Community Church, Godman Guild, Columbus Urban League, Adult Basic Literacy

Education, Franklin County Jobs & Family Services & Grandview Library. Upon successful completion, participants were eligible to purchase low-cost, refurbished computers and/or discounted high-speed internet connectivity. **Affordable, Advance Computer Training** is also available.

- OSU Extension is certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and approved by the City of Columbus. Because of these certifications, OSU Extension offers free pre-purchase **Home Buyer Education and Financial Literacy** training monthly to residents. Income eligible participants, who successfully complete the training, are eligible to apply for up to \$5,000 in down payment and closing cost assistance through the City of Columbus. Approximately 275 residents have attended our workshops. A disproportionate number of prospective home buyers reported that they found the staff, services and resources quite helpful!
- OSU Extension assisted Dr. Pat Gabbe of OSU Medical Center/Nationwide Children's Hospital in the establishment of the **Moms2B program** in Weinland Park. Because of the disproportionate amount of infant mortality in comparison to the other neighborhoods in the City of Columbus, this program has proven to be quite successful. Moms are delivering happy and healthy babies. Through the Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) program, women learned the importance of proper food and nutrition; food safety; shopping on a fixed budget and much more! Participants reported that they found the program and resources to be a tremendous asset to them and their families. The Moms 2B program averages 25 attendees per week. They now offer Moms2B programs on the south and near east sides of Columbus, OH. They engage various faculty, students and staff from OSU to assist in their program delivery. Now, OSU Extension is working with the Ohio Fatherhood Commission and the Ohio Child Support Enforcement Agency to work with fathers, who are often underserved and overlooked!?!
- OSU Extension was a part of a consortium of agencies involved in a 2 year U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development planning grant (\$865,000) in 2011 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This consortium of agencies were responsible for designing and developing a state of the art, regional food processing facility, which will include a co-op market, café, wholesale cash-and-carry food market, education programs, office space and incubator for food entrepreneurs that will generate revenue to support a job-training and placement center for unemployed residents of Weinland Park and nearby neighborhoods. This initiative will be known as the **Food District at Weinland Park**. OSU Extension developed an Education Plan for educational programs/services offered at this facility. OSU Extension surveyed 226 residents regarding the types of programming they wanted to see offered at the facility. OSU Extension also piloted some horticulture workshops for area residents, which were well received and overcrowded. This Education Plan afforded us an opportunity to showcase some of the Extension based, agriculture curricula produced by OSU, but other land-grant universities.
- OSU Extension was selected by NRP Group, LLC to provide supportive services to 40 families, who reside in **Weinland Park Homes**, which families can lease for 15 year and purchase at the conclusion of their lease term. Through OSU Extension's programs/services, it is our hope that these families are successful in their quest to purchase one of these new built homes. Furthermore, OSU Extension has funds available through the **Individual Development Account (IDA)** program to help individuals learn the importance of saving money and accumulating assets (home, small business or post-secondary education) and obtain a match \$1,000, if they save \$500 in a dedicated account, participate in financial literacy and asset specific training. OSU Extension has already assisted at least 17 families with the purchase of homes; 3 with the starting or expansion of businesses; and 5 with college!