

“The Pursuit of Happyness” Comes to Good News Partners!

Good News Partners is pleased to announce our keynote speaker for our 2012 Annual Fundraiser: Chris Gardner. He may not be Will Smith, but Chris Gardner is the real thing! His story, about the challenges of being homeless, became a No. 1 bestseller known as *The Pursuit of Happyness*. The story was turned into an award winning movie in 2006, starring Will Smith as Gardner.



Chris Gardner, with Will Smith, from the movie 'Pursuit of Happyness'

From a young age Gardner was exposed to violence, drugs, abuse, poverty and family illiteracy. He was raised by his single mother who taught him the importance of paving your own path, despite your past. Gardner became a single parent himself in 1981 to Chris Jr. Even though he had a job, he was unable to support himself and his son, which is when his journey of homelessness began.

Gardner is able to use his life experiences, from homelessness to homeowner to successful businessman, to inspire audiences. Good News Partners is eager to have Chris partner with us and share his life experiences. Be on the lookout for more information on our Spring Fundraiser!

“Bringing Hope Home” Annual Community Dinner 2011

Good News Partners' Annual Community Dinner on Friday October 28th was a special time of rejoicing as we celebrated the 35th Anniversary of Good News Partners. Over 200 partners gathered at the First Presbyterian Church of Evanston to share dinner, fellowship and worship through Gospel Song.

Several of our volunteer partners were honored in recognition of their dedicated work and support in ending homelessness and hopelessness. The recipients were:

- The Unitarian Church of Evanston
- The Church of the Holy Comforter
- Trinity United Methodist Church of Wilmette
- Willow Creek Community Church North Shore
- First Presbyterian Church of Evanston
- Tom Floyd, accountant volunteering in the GNP office twice a week, every week
- Dave Howard, executive consultant, volunteering in the GNP office twice a week, every week.

A highlight of this past year was the purchase of a building for more affordable housing in the GNP continuum. In honor of three members of our Board of Directors, the building at 1546 W. Jonquil Terrace was named after Jan Niemeyer, Bob Crowe and Denis Pierce. The JanCrowePierce Building offers 27 more units of affordable housing for GNP residents.

Blessings flowed as we gathered together. Visit our Facebook page for a picture album of the evening.

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From the Executive Director

A spiritual that I often find myself singing goes something like this: "Lord, help me to hold on...until my change comes." This letter contains news of many changes in our midst: new partners, new ways of working together, new developments within our community. Together they represent our efforts to respond to the invitation to us to become partners of Good News.

Our Board of Directors is growing, with four new members.

We are blessed to have Nancy Vallone, Tim Williams, Maia Davis-Singleton and Mike Nevergall join our team. Each of them has committed to a specialized area to serve within Good News Partners, along with their governance responsibility as a board member.

We have also added a Business Development Committee and Volunteer Committee to our board structure. Both of these areas of Good News Partners are blossoming and need further expertise to develop further.

Right now in the GNP neighborhood, we have a barber shop hoping to open soon, a budding new business for teen-age girls (jewelry making) and an initiative to create an art gallery North of Howard for area artists to display and sell their work. The Business Development Committee will help with writing business plans, reviewing legal issues and looking for small business loan opportunities

to help these ventures to get up and running. More economic development is in the planning stages.

Volunteers are the backbone of non-profit organizations, and GNP is blessed to have a strong core of people giving of their time and hard work to partner with us. The Volunteer Committee will work with Peter Horth, our Volunteer Coordinator. Peter has also been working with the Executive Service Corps on volunteer development and those initiatives are already being put in place.

We recognize the need to adapt when new opportunities arise. We also hope that we are transforming our minds, hearts, spirits and bodies to God's will in the face of change.



Our 2011 Board of Directors. Not pictured: Gladys Hyde, Steve Olson.

PLAN: "Look Out Rogers Park!"

The Parent Leadership in Action Network (PLAN) initiative is officially over, but participating parents are committed to continue working together to create a safer and more united community. Nora Wilburne, Good News Partners' chaplain and PLAN coordinator says, "Look out Rogers Park!" These parents are eager and dedicated to changing the neighborhood for the better. Wilburne sees the initiative as an opportunity for parents who are already ambassadors in the community to come together and share their passion.

After completing three months of training, including dedicated learning, listening, and networking, PLAN participants marked the conclusion of their first official year. The PLAN program, which was initiated by Governor Quinn in order to provide more job opportunities and create a network of parents to care for and support one another. Good News Partners, one of the 23 overseers of PLAN, hired 27 part-time employees this summer to take on the initiative. These employees, all parents themselves, initiated more than 300 conversations with

other parents in the Rogers Park neighborhood. These conversations were meant to empower fellow parents in their situation by providing practical advice and offering valuable resources and tools to build a strong and stable family.

David Hardrick, one of the PLAN parents, saw what an



Rev. Nora Wilburne, GNP Chaplain and PLAN coordinator, celebrates the many new friendships that were formed during the first year of PLAN.

impact he had on some of the parents in the neighborhood he conversed with. "Some parents just needed someone to unload on," he said "Some parents didn't

know about the existing resources in the community that I was able to tell them about. Our neighborhood definitely needs PLAN and I hope to see it again." David is not the only employee that hopes to see PLAN return. Wilburne said, "I absolutely believe it should be done again. There was tangible and intangible success in our community. Every single one of the PLAN members and coordinators felt that it made a positive difference in the community and in their own lives as well."



Ronn Frantz, GNP's Executive Director, with two PLAN parents.

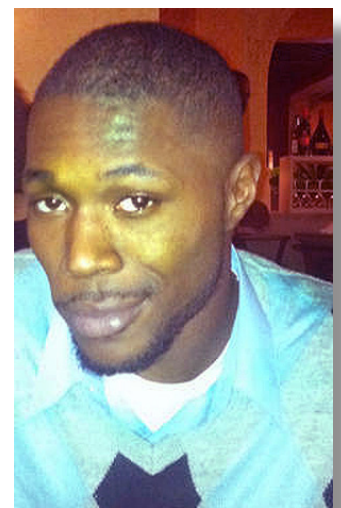
And Now for "The Rest of the Story"

"Charming, personable, joyful, respectful." These are just a few words those closest to Lawrence Wilson Jr. used to describe him. "Ricky" was killed on August 7, 2011 on the corner of Bosworth and Jonquil in a gang related act of violence. However it is not the whole story. This is the rest of the story...

Ricky graduated from Evanston Township High School in 2006 and went on to pursue a degree in higher education at Harper College. He had a love for music, but his real passion was football. He played varsity football in high school, continued to play in college, then eventually played at the semi-pro level.

As a younger man Ricky was lured into a gang. However, he turned his life around and was committed to helping others stay out of gangs.

Ricky became a committed follower of the Lord. He attended Vineyard Church on Sundays and was often found encouraging his friends to come along. His compassion for others was evident in his mentoring for youth at Total Resources Involvement in Benefiting Everyone (TRIBE), an organization empowering students by offering quality and affordable education.



Lawrence Wilson Jr.

Ricky also worked to keep other young men out of gangs. Ricky's contributions are greatly missed, but we rejoice over his life and love of God."

Recycling for Good

So much good has come from your donations!

We recently furnished apartments for two families in transition, thanks to the household item donations from The Unitarian Church of Evanston, 2nd Baptist and others. You donated many beds, a dining room set, a stove, refrigerator, and dishwasher, which have made some resident partners' lives much easier. **Thanks to you!**

Our current requests include:

- **Refrigerators**
- **Gas Stoves**
- **Electric Stoves**
- **Twin Beds**
- **Sheets**



Please contact:

brandon@GoodNewsPartners.org
(773) 764-4998

if we can help you recycle any of these items.



Brandon Lane and Jacin Nixon take a break from moving furniture for a photo opt.

Stories from the 'Hood

When asked, how he is, the typical response you hear from James Crockett is, "Blessed." You may not believe that someone who spent his young adult life in and out of prison, engaged in drug dealing and gang violence would answer with such delight, but Crockett has experienced the transforming work of God's grace. James, now 36 and a father of five, was exposed to violence and the realities of addiction and abuse at a very young age. "Growing up on the south side in some of the roughest projects, I saw a lot of horrific scenes," he says. When James was 14, his mother moved him and the rest of his siblings to the west side of Chicago where he first became involved with gangs. From the outside, his gang appeared innocent; it encouraged community building and followed principles based on the Koran. This particular gang enticed James because it gave him a place to find support and praise. His father was not a stable figure in his home, which forced James to search for another



place to fill that void. He admits that the whole time he was involved in criminal activity he "wasn't that person. Every time I sold that drug, I would worry about the family who would be impacted. Every time I was next to gun fire, I thought about the family it would affect."

Eventually this lifestyle led James to his first stay in prison. After three years, he was released and was again drawn to the familiar lifestyle of gang violence and drug abuse. He was able to find a job caring for an elderly woman. But selling drugs

gave him quick, easy cash, which is why it was so hard for him to turn away from gang involvement.

After being caught, again, with the possession of drugs and a gun, he returned to prison for three and a half years. He describes his time in prison as "Depressing. I

felt like I let my mom down." His life began to change after the second release. After committing his life to the Lord five years ago, James says, "God pressed upon my heart to leave everything behind." It was not until after 14 years of gang involvement that James obeyed the Holy Spirit and turned from his worldly ways.

During this time, his wife Mary, an IHOP employee, was the financial provider for their family. They could not afford to live in their apartment, which is when their partnership with Good News Partners began. Mary and their five children moved into New Life Interim Housing, while James lived out of his car. He says the time that they lived at New Life kept him hopeful because he was confident that they would have a place to sleep every night with meals provided. They were then referred to our single-room occupancy Jonquil Hotel. They resided there four years until they were able to stabilize their life and save money to move into their own place. James credits Good News Partners for helping him and his family make it through financially and creating a safe place for them to grow. James particularly thanks Ronn Frantz, our Executive Director, who employs James as a security guard at GNP's new apartment

building. "He was the key for us," James says. "He put me to work and was the cornerstone in helping me out financially. There is just something about working for a brother in Christ. I always wanted to do that." James was able to save money and recently moved his family to a two-bedroom apartment in our newest building.

James continues to praise God even in the midst of tough times. "I love God more than anything in life," he says. Since committing his life to the Lord five years ago, James has started a ministry for the men on the streets. It would not be rare to find James walking around very late at night, among the gang bangers and drug dealers with his Bible in hand. He wants to build these men up and provide hope and support for them. He wants to fill the fatherly role that is absent in most of their lives and create a support system. One of the biggest problems he sees is the lack of resources. "I wish I was a billionaire so that I could provide the resources for gang members to be able to escape" he says. James looks back on his life and recalls, "the life I lived before was death, pain, depression. No good came out of it. Now I just love living. I have more self worth and dignity. I can write on the blank pages of my kids' lives. I can help my wife grow. I am blessed."

Happenings @ GNP

With the help of jewelry designer Lisa Orstein, Creative Designs by Lisa, six young women, ages 10-18, are developing a jewelry business. Good News Jewelry Designers, was created to provide an artistic outlet for our highly energetic and creative students. Each Wednesday they meet for two hours to plan, design and create jewelry. Lately that has turned into three-hour-meetings because of their enthusiasm for their creations. Not only does the new business give these young women an opportunity to make beautiful jewelry, but it also



Karen shows off two of her latest designs.

provides real-life business experience. They are exploring topics such as budgeting, marketing and investing. Each designer brings a unique style to the table. While Kaya

has an eye for elegant-looking jewelry, Patricia delights in creating jewelry that reminds her of dragons, and Karen enjoys using bright colors. Good News Jewelry Designers will display their custom made jewelry on the website. If your church is interested in selling their designs at your Church Bazaar or Holiday Boutique, please contact Natalie@goodnewspartners.org.



Kaya and April hard at work creating a one-of-a-kind piece of Jewelry.

Volunteer with Us

“How can I help?” We hear these words often and they are music to our ears! Each person has gifts and skills to offer, which are needed for the Body of Christ to function fully and well.

Thank you to recent volunteers:

TUTORING STUDENTS: First Presbyterian Church of Evanston every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday

- Loyola University Students

SATURDAY MORNING KID’S TIME:

- 1st Saturday of every month – Church of the Holy Comforter
- 2nd Saturday of every month – Trinity United Methodist Church (Monthly Birthday Club)
- 3rd Saturday of every month – The Unitarian Church of Evanston (Cooking Class)

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS:

Every Saturday Morning — 1st Presbyterian Church Evanston and The Unitarian Church

- Monday evenings “Creative Hanging Out” at New Life — 1st Presbyterian Church Evanston
- Wednesday Music at New Life — 1st Presbyterian Church Evanston

CHURCH MISSION TRIPS:

- July — Blacksburg Presbyterian Church
- July 9 — Park Ridge Community Church
- July 23 — Willow Creek North Shore “Just Serve”
- August 1-5 — Willow Creek Community Church
- August 12-13 — Church of the Servant
- September 17 — Unitarian Church of Evanston
- October 1 — Destination Church
- October 8 — First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights



Volunteers building relationships with neighborhood children—one of the most valuable components of partnering with GNP.

A SPECIAL “THANK YOU” TO:

The Unitarian Church of Evanston for all of their hard work in our new kitchen. This summer several volunteers from UCE spent hours constructing, painting, moving and re-finishing The Jonquil Hotel’s Learning Center kitchen. They celebrated the kitchen’s grand opening on September 17th by volunteering to cook a delicious homemade breakfast.

Also thanks to UCE for putting on the “Night of the Arts” event. Several members of the Unitarian Church partnered with residents in the North of Howard neighborhood for a fun night of crafts and fellowship. Participants forged new friendships and designed many beautiful creations.



A delicious Saturday morning breakfast to celebrate the opening of The Jonquil Hotel’s new kitchen.



Volunteers from Unitarian Church of Evanston

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES
COMING UP:**

We have our “Work Crew Saturday” every month:

The Saturday Work Crew helps the rehab crew with various fix-up activities in one of our 10 buildings, including painting, scraping, sanding, cleaning, moving, nailing, cutting, and measuring.

Workers should wear work clothes, boots, and bring work gloves. If you have any other supplies or equipment you may have for your project that you would like to bring along, please do so (brushes, scrapers, ladders, etc).

UPCOMING DATES:

- November 19, 2011
- December 10, 2011
- January 14, 2011

In addition to groups of volunteers providing largely unskilled labor, we have need for specialized skills from our volunteers. What are your gifts, skills, and experience? How specifically would you like to partner with us to build bridges of reconciliation and foster justice, both for yourself and with others? We will continue to seek specific ways volunteers can participate in God’s Good News plan to end homelessness and hopelessness.

**GOOD NEWS PARTNERS
MISSION STATEMENT:**
**“To end homelessness
and hopelessness with
everyone God brings to us,
to foster justice, and
to build bridges
of reconciliation.”**

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gnpchicago



QUESTIONS? SUGGESTIONS? COMMENTS?

Please contact: **Jan Hubbard**, *Director of Development*
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GOOD NEWS PARTNERS

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JOIN US AS A VOLUNTEER:

- Tutoring
- Youth Activities
- Administrative or tech support
- Coordinate a work crew
- Prayer Network

HELP US FURTHER OUR MISSION:

- Host a small gathering of friends to hear about GNP
- Schedule a site visit at GNP
- Donate on our website:

www.goodnewspartners.org