

COMMUNITY for CHANGE

Community for Change is a small group of citizens who reside on the eastside of Detroit. Our area includes Burns to James Court. This bounded by Gratiot and I-94. Our mission is to provide resources and information to our residents as well as a grassroots approach to resolving quality of life issues within our community

In May of this year, I attended a meeting that was held on the eastside of Detroit for block club presidents and their members. I left the meeting feeling somewhat discouraged after I was told that there weren't any immediate plans to board up vacant home and to maintain the over grown lots in our area. On May 25, 2014, I contacted a representative from the Detroit Department of Neighborhoods for assistance. I suggested that maybe the city could reach out to the businesses in the various communities to provide, on loan, lawn equipment so that the residents could remove the overgrown vacant lots and for the citizens to maintain their community. I was advised that the City could not impose on businesses to provide this service to the residents. I then met with the members of our community group to determine another course of action.

We then reached out to the businesses in this area with hope of assisting us with addressing the blight in our area. We asked specifically for tools to assist us with the elimination and ongoing maintenance of overgrown vacant lots which have become an eyesore and an issue of public safety for the residents who live in the area.

The response was overwhelming!!!!

Sam Samman, owner of Farmer John Food Center located at 9731 Harper, was the first to respond. As a businessman in the community, Sam has always delivered on every request made to him from our organization. From donating food for baskets to refreshments when our organization hosted meetings or when political nominees held meet and greets. Sam simply asked what did we equipment did we currently have. We replied that he was the first person we contacted. One week later, we were presented with A Toro Self Propelling Lawn Mower:



Sam arrived to Detroit in 1977 at the age of 17. After years of working in various jobs in Detroit, Sam saved some money and obtains a loan to open his first shop on Detroit's Eastside. After a few years, He sold it and bought other businesses. Sam believes that investing in the property and the surrounding areas benefits both his business and the residents. A few years later, Sam, along with his brother, purchased Farmer John Food Center where is seen daily from open to close. He has truly turned it into a gem in the heart of Detroit.



Next, we approached Wadi Bierko, affectionately known as "Eddie". He is the owner of Super Giant Super Market. It's located at 8830 Gratiot. We explained what our goal is as a community group and what we were trying to accomplish. He agreed to purchase a chainsaw.



“Eddie” arrived in Detroit, December 1975. His first job was with his brother at a Detroit area store. In 1987, “Eddie” opened Super Giant. He is seen daily working alongside his three sons, Jason, Wadi, jr and Nelson. He says his biggest accomplishments are his family and the relationships that he has built in the neighborhood.

The last business approached was Vincent Ayar. He is the owner of Food Town Super Market located at 7811 Gratiot near Van Dyke. He agreed to purchase the weed whacker.



Vincent and his family have owned Food Town since August 2000. They take pride in providing the neighborhood with a clean store that sells the best quality of meat and produce with fast and friendly service. They offer a large variety of services such as check cashing and bill payment as well as Western Union services. The store has just completed its remodeling from top to bottom. They take pride in their store, the city, and the community.

We then contacted our district’s city council representative’s office, Mary Sheffield, and spoke to Brian Donnell. We asked if there was any type of service award that could be presented to them to recognize their efforts of given back to the community. It was later decided that they would each receive the Spirit of Detroit Award which Brian personally delivered award.

Lastly, we asked if a fourth award could be presented to Dirk Richardson. Dirk maintained the two corner lots located on Fischer and Burns, The Lambert Playground and its surrounding area on Burns street for nine years. He even revitalized the neighborhood basketball court with a new bench, nets and decorated the poles which held the nets with the Air Jordan emblem so that the youth in the area would have somewhere to play. All while working the midnight shift as a contract worker for Kroger in Romeo. Earlier this year, He stated that He would no longer be able to continue the upkeep of the lots because they were damaged and that he was no longer financially able to replace them. When He was approached with the ‘Spirit of Detroit’ Award, He simply stated that He didn’t need any recognition and

that He loved what He was doing. Sadly, Dirk passed away July 5th, 2014. Dirk receiving that award before his death, has allowed his family to know that He was truly appreciated and that He was loved and cared for by those in the neighborhood for everything that He had done to contribute to its revitalization.



We are proud of our efforts and what can be achieved when businesses and the community work together.

In closing, we have implemented the following process that enables those in the community use of the donated lawn equipment:

- Equipment stored at 6148 Fischer Street by Deon Moore.
- Must use sign in/out sheet
- Residents must show ID.
- Equipment availability: 9am-6pm M-Sat

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(See Attachment)